

SEPARATED MOTHERS WITH A
CHILD SUPPORT LIABILITY IN
AUSTRALIA: DOES THE GENDER OF
THE LIABLE PARENT MATTER FOR
COMPLIANCE?

Maria Vnuk

October 2017

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
School of Demography
The Australian National University

© Copyright by Maria Vnuk 2017

All rights reserved

Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated, I declare this thesis is my own original work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Vnuk'. The 'M' is stylized with a large loop, and 'Vnuk' is written in a cursive script.

Maria Vnuk

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my panel Bruce Smyth, Bryan Rodgers, Vu Son and David Stanton, and previous panel members Juliet Behrens and Jeromey Temple. Your advice and support are greatly appreciated.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the support of my primary supervisor Bruce Smyth who always made space in his very busy schedule to spend time to talk about child support with me whenever I was in Canberra or he was in Adelaide, and who responded to my countless emails and phone calls with such patient and measured advice. Bruce, your expertise and encouragement has made this thesis possible.

I would also like to thank the Child Support Research section of the Department of Social Services (in all its myriad iterations), especially my manager Marian Esler for being so generous with study leave while I was employed by DSS.

I also acknowledge the involvement of the Child Support Agency who, with DSS, contributed to Time 0 of the Child Support Reform Study (CSRS), and as a partner in the later Australian Research Grant Linkage Project (Linkage Project No. 0989558) with the Australian National University.

Of course, the present study would not have been possible without the separated parents who participated in the CSRS. I will be forever grateful. I hope my work ‘makes a difference’ and that you feel that you have been heard.

I acknowledge the support of the Australian Government via the fees-offset I received under the Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship.

Thank you to the staff and students at the School of Demography. I especially value your comments at my seminars and at our Work in Progress days over almost eight years of part-time study.

To my colleagues in the International Network of Child Support Scholars (and my other research colleagues) who I have followed, and who continue to give me such insightful comments, thanks so much for keeping evidenced-based child support research and policy on the government agenda.

Last, but absolutely not least, my wife Chris Matthews, my soulmate, my rock. You always supported me through all the angst, the computer malfunctions, my crisis of confidence, my seemingly endless ‘final’ drafts. You put up with the long years of early morning hours and weekends taken up with this study, and rarely complained about my absence. I know that Marvel comics helped to keep you entertained so that my preoccupation was less obvious and I’m grateful that they continued to produce new super hero series. Chris, your contribution to the completion of this thesis is immeasurable.

Any remaining errors are mine alone.

Abstract

In recent decades, changes in post-separation parenting arrangements in Australia have led to an increase in the small but significant group of mothers with shared (i.e., equal or near-equal time) or minority-time, and mothers liable to pay child support to fathers.

While the Child Support Scheme is ostensibly gender-neutral, gender-neutral policy does not necessarily produce gender-neutral outcomes. Research with separated parents with more ‘traditional’ arrangements indicates that fathers who spend time with their children are more likely to comply with their child support than those who rarely or never see them. But might social norms for ‘good’ mothers and ‘good’ fathers differ? Gendered norms of mothering as ‘ever present’ suggest the same relationship between parenting time and money might not apply.

The present study uses data from the Child Support Reform Study, a national random sample of separated parents in Australia. In total, 185 mothers with a child support liability were identified. Drawing on reports from separated mothers and fathers liable to pay child support in 2008 (Time 0), the study found that 43% of liable mothers had shared- or more-time, and their children were older. Mothers worked fewer hours in paid employment, often had a self-employed former partner, and a negative (particularly fearful) relationship than liable fathers.

Using a typology of liable mothers developed for the study, differences in socio-demographic characteristics, family dynamics, and wellbeing emerged between the four liable mother groups (i.e., those with less-time, equal-time, more-time, and split-residence). In addition, parenting time was negatively related to perceived fairness of child support and compliance—both decreasing as parenting time increased.

Although there was no significant difference between liable mothers’ and liable fathers’ compliance when measured as in full and on time, mothers were significantly less likely to pay any of the liability, and marginally less compliant where payment was transferred between parents privately.

Nonetheless most mothers contributed in-kind support, including all mothers who did not pay their liability in full.

Odds of non-compliance for liable mothers increased as their time with their child increased, and was higher for mothers with split-residence. Low levels of inter-parental conflict over money also related to non-compliance.

The study's findings highlight the complexity of liable mothers' family circumstances compared to liable fathers. They illustrate the importance of taking a gender perspective to policy. Liable mothers and liable fathers differ in a number of important ways. This points to gender norms as important in understanding the compliance of mothers with a child support liability in Australia.

Table of contents

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

1.1 *Gender and post-separation parenting*..... 1

1.1.1 Language and the economics of separation 2

1.2 *The Australian Child Support Scheme* 4

1.2.1 The original Scheme..... 5

1.2.2 The revised Scheme 6

1.2.3 Scheme coverage 7

1.2.4 Liable mothers: a small but growing group in the Scheme caseload? 8

1.2.5 Child Support Scheme data 10

1.3 *Policy and social trends*..... 11

1.3.1 Government policies and low-income parents..... 12

1.3.2 Children living apart from their mother..... 15

1.3.3 Shared-time..... 16

1.3.4 Parental employment 17

1.3.5 Scheme caseload complexity and fluidity 18

1.3.6 Changes to the Scheme 20

1.4 *Child support compliance* 22

1.4.1 Compliance by gender: administrative data 22

1.4.2 Compliance by gender: survey data 24

1.4.3 Why compliance matters..... 25

1.5 *Research questions and theoretical framework* 27

1.5.1 Gender and parenting..... 30

1.5.2 Gender and mothering post-separation 31

1.5.3 Gender and money 31

1.5.4 Why this research matters for policy 33

1.6 *Structure of the thesis*..... 34

Chapter 2 Literature review of nonresident mothers: Australian studies 36

2.1 *What are the characteristics of liable mothers in Australia?* 36

2.1.1 Studies about nonresident mothers 37

2.1.2 Government-funded research..... 39

2.2 *Compliance rates of liable mothers*..... 44

2.2.1 Child support compliance rates for recently separated parents: family law evaluations..... 45

2.2.2 Qualitative reports on compliance..... 47

2.3 *Reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers* 47

2.4	<i>Key points from the Australian literature</i>	<i>50</i>
Chapter 3 Literature review: international studies.....		53
3.1	<i>What are the characteristics of liable mothers?</i>	<i>53</i>
3.1.1	US nonresident mother studies including child support	55
3.1.2	Nordic studies.....	63
3.1.3	Studies from other countries	64
3.2	<i>Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?</i>	<i>65</i>
3.3	<i>What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?</i>	<i>68</i>
3.4	<i>The role of gender: studies with other respondents.....</i>	<i>71</i>
3.5	<i>Findings and research gaps.....</i>	<i>74</i>
3.5.1	Theoretical framework and methodology	74
3.5.2	Findings from the international literature	75
3.5.3	Relevance and research gaps.....	76
Chapter 4 Methodology.....		80
4.1	<i>How the baseline sample was selected</i>	<i>80</i>
4.1.1	Procedure and survey content	81
4.1.2	Weights.....	82
4.1.3	Former couple sample	83
4.2	<i>Determining final sample sizes for liable parents and payees.....</i>	<i>83</i>
4.3	<i>Statistical method</i>	<i>86</i>
4.4	<i>Variables used in the analyses</i>	<i>87</i>
4.4.1	Socio-demographic, family dynamics and wellbeing measures	87
4.4.2	Child support and compliance measures	95
4.5	<i>Preliminary technical notes.....</i>	<i>101</i>
4.5.1	Using quantitative research to explore gender.....	101
4.5.2	‘Minority-time’ or ‘liable’ mothers	102
4.6	<i>Limitations.....</i>	<i>103</i>
4.6.1	Intersectionality	103
4.6.2	Small sample sizes	104
Chapter 5 What are the characteristics of mothers with a child support liability in Australia?		107
5.1	<i>Child support liability.....</i>	<i>107</i>
5.1.1	Mothers’ and fathers’ reports of their overnights with the focal child and liability.....	109
5.2	<i>Comparative analysis: liable mothers and liable fathers.....</i>	<i>110</i>

5.2.1	Analytic sample and related notes.....	110
5.2.2	Household composition.....	112
5.2.3	Family dynamics.....	121
5.2.4	Personal wellbeing.....	124
5.3	<i>Key differences between liable parents.....</i>	125
5.3.1	Modelling of key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers	127
5.4	<i>Discussion.....</i>	133
5.4.1	Household composition.....	133
5.4.2	Employment.....	134
5.4.3	Time with children	135
5.4.4	Child age.....	135
5.4.5	Parental relationship quality	136
5.4.6	Parenting arrangement decision	137
5.4.7	Former partner self-employment	137
5.4.8	Income.....	138
5.4.9	Sex of children.....	139
5.5	<i>Summary.....</i>	139
Chapter 6 Differences between liable mothers		141
6.1	<i>A liable mother typology.....</i>	141
6.1.1	Technical notes	142
6.2	<i>Less-time liable mothers.....</i>	149
6.3	<i>Equal-time liable mothers.....</i>	151
6.4	<i>More-time liable mothers.....</i>	153
6.5	<i>Split-residence liable mothers.....</i>	154
6.6	<i>Discussion.....</i>	156
Chapter 7 Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?.....		158
7.1	<i>Analytic sample: child support and compliance.....</i>	159
7.1.1	How the liability was determined	160
7.1.2	Method of collection	161
7.1.3	Expected child support amount	162
7.1.4	Actual child support paid	163
7.1.5	Paid in full.....	164
7.1.6	Paid on time	164
7.1.7	Ever paid and reasons for non-payment.....	165
7.2	<i>Compliance.....</i>	166

7.2.1	Compliance by assessment and collection method	166
7.3	<i>Compliance rates for liable parents and payees</i>	<i>167</i>
7.3.1	Discussion	169
7.4	<i>Compliance in the former couple sample</i>	<i>171</i>
7.4.1	Characteristics of parents in the liable-mother dyads	172
7.4.2	Concordance on reports on fullness, timeliness and compliance in the liable-mother dyads 173	
7.4.3	Differences in level of concordance in liable-mother and liable-father dyads	176
7.4.4	Discussion	178
7.5	<i>Differences between liable mothers on child support payments and compliance.....</i>	<i>179</i>
7.6	<i>Summary.....</i>	<i>181</i>
Chapter 8 In-kind contributions		183
8.1.1	Prescribed in-kind items	184
8.1.2	Anything else paid	186
8.1.3	In-kind payments and compliance.....	187
8.1.4	In-kind contributions for liable parents and payees	187
8.1.5	Prescribed in-kind payments and anything else paid in the former couple sample.....	189
8.1.6	Discussion	190
8.2	<i>‘Soft’ compliance.....</i>	<i>193</i>
8.2.1	Liable mothers with another arrangement	195
8.2.2	‘Soft’ compliance for liable parents and payees	197
8.2.3	‘Soft’ compliance in the former couple sample	197
8.3	<i>Satisfaction and fairness of child support payment</i>	<i>198</i>
8.3.1	Differences between liable mothers: in-kind, ‘soft’ compliance and fairness	199
8.4	<i>Summary.....</i>	<i>202</i>
Chapter 9 Why are some liable mothers non-compliant?		204
9.1	<i>Theoretical approach</i>	<i>204</i>
9.2	<i>Odds of non-compliance for liable mothers</i>	<i>206</i>
9.2.1	Liability and collection method.....	207
9.2.2	Socio-demographic circumstances	208
9.2.3	Former relationship.....	211
9.2.4	Parenting time	213
9.2.5	Family dynamics	215
9.2.6	Personal wellbeing	217
9.2.7	Satisfaction and fairness of the child support payment	218

9.3	<i>Modelling of the key predictors of non-compliance for liable mothers</i>	219
9.4	<i>Discussion</i>	223
9.4.1	Non-compliance and parenting time	224
9.4.2	Arguments about money	227
9.4.3	Income and employment	228
9.4.4	Parental relationship quality	229
9.5	<i>Summary</i>	230
Chapter 10 Conclusion and future directions		231
10.1.1	Question 1: What are the characteristics of mothers with a child support liability in Australia?	232
10.1.2	Question 2: Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?	234
10.1.3	Question 3: What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?	235
10.1.4	Relevance of gender expectations of mothering	237
10.2	<i>Gender neutral policy</i>	237
10.3	<i>Key issues for child support policy</i>	239
10.3.1	Shared-time	239
10.3.2	Split-residence and older children	241
10.3.3	The minimum liability	243
10.3.4	Self-employment	244
10.3.5	Safety concerns	245
10.3.6	Private Collect	248
10.4	<i>Implications for service delivery</i>	249
10.4.1	Supporting liable mothers	249
10.4.2	Non-compliance and debt	249
10.4.3	Responding to family violence	251
10.5	<i>Limitations</i>	253
10.6	<i>Future research</i>	254
10.7	<i>Parting reflections</i>	255
Appendix A		280
Appendix B		311
Appendix C		321

List of tables

Table 1.1	Percentage of female payers in the CSA caseload 1996–2009.....	9
Table 1.2	Original Child Support Scheme: number of cases by nights with payee per year (June 2008).....	11
Table 4.1	Final analytic sample	86
Table 4.2	Former couple sample.....	86
Table 4.3	Socio-demographic, family dynamics and wellbeing measures.....	93
Table 4.4	Child support measures.....	99
Table 5.1	Mothers’ and fathers’ reports of overnights with the focal child and whether they are the liable parent, the payee or neither	108
Table 5.2	Liable parents: current circumstances	112
Table 5.3	Liable parents: socioeconomic circumstances.....	114
Table 5.4	Liable parents: former relationship.....	117
Table 5.5	Liable parents: focal child age and living arrangements	118
Table 5.6	Liable parents: parenting arrangements of all former relationship children (18 years or younger)	119
Table 5.7	Liable parents: time with focal child	121
Table 5.8	Liable parents: family dynamics	122
Table 5.9	Liable parents: parenting arrangement decision for the focal child	124
Table 5.10	Liable parents: personal wellbeing.....	125
Table 5.11	Liable mothers and liable fathers: similarities and differences	126
Table 5.12	Variables used in logistic regression models of the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers	129
Table 5.13	Logistic regression models of the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers	132
Table 6.1	Liable mother typology	142
Table 6.2	Differences between liable mothers: socio-demographic characteristics ..	144
Table 6.3	Differences between liable mothers: family dynamics	147
Table 6.4	Differences between liable mothers: personal wellbeing	149
Table 7.1	Liable parents: child support collection method	161
Table 7.2	Liable parents: expected amount and actual child support paid	163
Table 7.3	Liable parents: regularity of payment	165

Table 7.4	Liabe parents: compliance by assessment type and collection method ...	167
Table 7.5	Liabe parents and payees: compliance.....	168
Table 7.6	Comparison of reports from 78 former couple liabe-mothers and payee fathers: compliance.....	175
Table 7.7	Liabe-mother and liabe-father dyads: level of concordant reports on whether payment made in full and always on time	176
Table 7.8	Liabe-mother and liabe-father dyads: level of concordant reports of compliance.....	178
Table 7.9	Differences between liabe mothers: child support arrangements and compliance.....	180
Table 8.1	Liabe parents: in-kind contributions for prescribed items	185
Table 8.2	Liabe parents: pays for anything else in kind	187
Table 8.3	Liabe parents and payees: in-kind contributions	188
Table 8.4	Liabe-mother and liabe-father dyads: concordance on reports of in-kind contributions	190
Table 8.5	‘Soft’ compliance for liabe parents previously treated as ‘not in full and/or not on time’.....	194
Table 8.6	Liabe parents: compliance and ‘soft’ compliance	195
Table 8.7	Liabe parents and payees: compliance and ‘soft’ compliance.....	197
Table 8.8	Liabe-mother and liabe-father dyads: concordance on reports of compliance and ‘soft’ compliance	198
Table 8.9	Differences between liabe mothers: in-kind contributions, ‘soft’ compliance, satisfaction and fairness of child support payment	201
Table 9.1	Liabe mothers: odds of non-compliance related to the liability	208
Table 9.2	Liabe mothers: odds of non-compliance related to socio-demographic circumstances.....	209
Table 9.3	Liabe mothers: odds of non-compliance related to the former relationship.....	212
Table 9.4	Liabe mothers: odds of non-compliance related to the former relationship children	214
Table 9.5	Liabe mothers: odds of non-compliance related to family dynamics	216
Table 9.6	Liabe mothers: odds of non-compliance related to personal wellbeing....	218
Table 9.7	Liabe mothers: odds of non-compliance related to satisfaction and fairness of child support payment	219

Table 9.8 Logistic regression model of odds of non-compliance for liable mothers:
Model 1 222

Table 9.9 Logistic regression model of odds of non-compliance for liable mothers:
Model 1a..... 223

List of figures

Figure 5-1 Mothers’ and fathers’ reports of their overnights with the focal child:
percentage liable 109

Figure 9-1 Liable mother compliance by overnights per week with focal child 225

GLOSSARY

Active caseload: cases registered with the Child Support Agency/Child Support Program with a current assessment, including cases with no current liability

Adjusted taxable income: income used in the administrative assessment of child support. Taxable income from last relevant year (that is, year before the start of the child support period) plus (i) foreign income, net rental property losses and reportable fringe benefits, and (ii) tax-free pensions and benefits and other net investment losses (from July 2008) and (iii) reportable superannuation contributions (from 2009–10)

Adult child: former relationship child aged 19 to 24 living with the respondent or their former partner

Blended family: couple family with a biological or adopted child of the couple and one or both parents have a child from a previous relationship

Centrelink: The agency managing government payments. Centrelink is part of the Department of Human Services

Child support period: A child support period is a period of time to which a child support assessment applies. The date of the start of the child support period determines which financial year of income the Registrar uses to make the assessment¹

Child Support Collect: the Child Support Agency/Child Support Program collects the expected payment from the liable parent (either voluntarily or enforced) and disburses to the payee

Compliance: the expected amount of child support paid in full and on time

Daytime-only: parent spends some time with the focal child in the daytime but has no overnights

¹ <<http://guides.dss.gov.au/child-support-guide/2/3/1>> (viewed 9 June 2017)

Domestic violence: ‘a pattern of abusive behaviour in an intimate relationship that over time puts one person in a position of power over another and causes fear’²

Equal-time: roughly 50/50 time split between parents, that is 48%/52% nights

English-speaking Western country: Australia, New Zealand, USA, UK and Canada

Former couple sample: respondents who were (i) a liable parent and their former partner was a payee and both were interviewed or (ii) a payee and their former partner was a liable parent and both were interviewed

Government payment: payment made by the government to support an individual such as Newstart (for those seeking employment), Parenting Payment or Disability Support Pension

Less than regular-time/care: revised Scheme time category where the parent has 0–13.9% nights, 0–51 nights

Major time/care: original Scheme time category where the parent has 60–69.9% nights, 220–255 nights

Majority-time parent: parent has 70% or more nights (or 65% from 1 July 2008); parent with more overnights

Minor time/care: the parent has 0–29.9% nights, 220–255 nights: unofficial term under the original Scheme time categories

Minority-time parent: parent has less than 30% time (or 35% from 1 July 2008); parent with less overnights, includes parents who spend little or no time with their child

Newstart: a means-tested government payment made to an unemployed adult looking for work

Nil paid: pays none of the liability. This contrasts with no current liability (see below)

² <<https://www.1800respect.org.au/family-friends/common-questions/what-is-domestic-family-violence/>> (viewed 23 November 2016).

No current liability: has an active case but neither meant to pay or receive child support in the current child support period. This contrasts with nil paid (see above).

Non-compliance: payment not in full and/or not on time, includes nil paid

Nordic country: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden

Original Scheme: Child Support Scheme that applied until 1 July 2008

Parenting arrangement: where the child/children live and how much time they spend with each parent. Includes formal and informal arrangements

Prescribed item: payee's childcare or pre-school fees; school fees; uniforms or books; essential medical or dental costs; payee's share of rent or mortgage; payee's utility costs; and payee's motor vehicle expenses

Prescribed Non-Agency Payments: credit of up to 30% of the liability in Child Support Collect cases for payment of a prescribed item. Credit does require agreement from the payee

Primary carer: majority-time parent

Principal carer: 'someone who is responsible for the day to day care, welfare and development of a child under 16 years of age. Only one person at a time can be a principal carer of a child and this is generally the person who provides the greater amount of day to day care, such as a parent or guardian'³

Private Collect: child support payments are transferred privately between parents

Regular care/time: revised Scheme time category where the parent has 14–34.9% nights; 52–127 nights

Research with liable-father cases: research with nonresident fathers and/or resident mothers, that is child support research that focuses on

³ <<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/mutual-obligation-requirements-and-exemptions-principal-carers>> (viewed 23 November 2016)

payments from liable fathers to payee mothers regardless of the parent whose reports were analysed

Revised Scheme: Child Support Scheme that applied from 1 July 2008

Shared-time: each parent has 30–69.9% of nights (35–65% nights from 1 July 2008). Also, original Scheme time category where the parent has 40–59.9% nights [where specified only]

Soft compliance: payment of less than the liability by agreement, or in-kind or other contribution in lieu of cash child support. Parents are also considered ‘soft’ compliant where they substantially comply (i.e., pay mostly on time or at least 90% of the liability).

Sole-time/care: original Scheme time category where the parent has 70% or more nights, 256–365 nights

Split-residence: siblings have different parenting arrangement where the mother has majority-time of one or more former relationship children and the father has majority-time of another child or children. Also includes arrangements where one or more children are in shared-time and one or more children have majority-time with either parent.

Stepfamily: couple family with no biological or adopted child of the couple and one or both parents have a child from a previous relationship

Substantial time/care: original Scheme time category where the parent has 30–39.9% nights, 110–145 nights

With child rate: higher rate of Newstart paid to a person with at least 14% day-to-day care of a child

Chapter 1 Introduction

Child support is money transferred between separated parents (or parents who never lived together) to help raise their children. The typical arrangement is a nonresident father paying a resident mother. Mothers who are liable to pay child support to fathers are a small group in Australia.

A common perception among fathers' groups, and possibly the broader population, is that nonresident mothers never pay child support (Dads on the Air 2008; Karvelas 2011). The founder of the Lone Fathers Association Australia, Barry Williams, asserts that:

[n]on-custodial mothers are getting an easy ride from the Child Support Agency...They [the Child Support Agency] seem to have a culture where if you're female, it doesn't seem to matter...With dads, they hound them and hound them and hound them [to pay] (Barry Williams quoted in Packham 2008).

But evidence for this view is limited and inconclusive. It is not known if mothers pay child support when they should, and if not, why not?

Financial support, caregiving and decision-making are key parental responsibilities. But how they are maintained after separation varies. Media reports on child support compliance regularly refer to 'deadbeat dads' (Hockey 2006; Karvelas 2010a; Viellaris 2011) not deadbeat *parents*. This stereotype focuses on men's financial responsibilities whereas a nonresident mother is portrayed as an 'abandoning mother' (Eardley & Griffiths 2009; Thompson, R & Laible 1999). These differing perceptions of post-separation parenting roles emphasise caregiving over financial responsibilities for mothers.

1.1 Gender and post-separation parenting

Although child support law and policy are gender-neutral, parenting is gendered which, according to Funder (1998: 52), relates to 'the values, expectations, and rules men and women learn about how they can or should parent'. Gender-normative roles mean that mothers can expect to have the main responsibility for day-to-day care of children post-separation and fathers to pay child support. Research in Australia and

elsewhere highlights the gendered nature of child support (see, for example, Coltrane & Hickman 1992; Cook, K & Natalier 2012; Natalier 2012; Summerfield et al. 2010) and family law (see, for example, Kay 2002; Moloney 2001b; Parkinson 2001; Rhoades, Graycar & Harrison 2001). In Australia, this ‘gender war’ has been fought through submissions to government inquiries into different aspects of post-separation parenting (Fogarty & Augoustinos 2008; Kaye & Tolmie 1998; Rhoades 2010). Indeed self-help resources produced for separated parents imply that men’s and women’s financial priorities are vastly different (compare Bickerdike et al. 2009; Rogers et al. 2010).

Around the world child support research almost exclusively focuses on nonresident fathers and resident mothers, with mothers’ reports on child support receipt dominating. Until recently, responses from nonresident mothers and resident fathers were either merged within the larger groupings, or omitted from analysis altogether (Vnuk 2010)—an analytic approach necessitated by the few respondents in these atypical groups. Some studies of nonresident fathers provide reasons for non-compliance, although it is unclear whether these explain mothers’ non-payment. Little is known about Australian mothers who should pay child support, especially from their reports. This thesis provides a different perspective on child support by applying a contemporary gender lens to parental financial responsibility and the flow of money between households.

1.1.1 ***Language and the economics of separation***

Some clarification about the language used in this thesis is warranted. Language describing modern post-separation relationships is challenging, not just because of the complex nature of interpersonal relationships (and families) but also because of their dynamic nature. Over the past two decades in Australia legal terminology describing parents who mainly live apart from children after separation (mostly fathers) has shifted from ‘noncustodial parent’ to ‘nonresident parent’ and, recently, to ‘the parent the child spends less time with’. This shift reflects a general drift in many countries to gender-neutral language in family law and a move away from win/lose terminology. The complex and

fluid nature of post-separation parental responsibilities means a resident/nonresident dichotomy is less precise in defining parental roles or child support liability as the separation (and nonresidence) often exists between *parents* rather than a parent and child.¹ Hereafter ‘minority-time’ or ‘less-time’ (depending on the context) is used. The language of parenting ‘time’, rather than ‘care’, de-emphasises the view that one parent is now less a parent or is the ‘non’ parent who ‘visits’ their child.

The official terms used in the Australian child support legislation are *payer* and *payee*. According to the Macquarie Dictionary, payer means ‘a person who pays money for something’; by contrast, a payee is ‘a person to whom money is paid or is to be paid’ (*The Macquarie Dictionary Online* 2013). For clarity, the term ‘liable parent’ rather than ‘payer’ is used as it is unclear whether payer includes a non-paying (that is, non-compliant) parent. This distinction is philosophically important because it gives primacy to parental financial *responsibilities* over children’s *living arrangements*. Indeed while both time and money are important for children and parents emotionally and psychologically—with much of the recent debate consumed by parenting time, with money as a buttress to this—little has been written about the many ways in which money can influence a separated parent’s self-identity and behaviour, and act as a ‘tracer of relationships’ in separated families (but see, for example, Millman 1991; Smyth & Rodgers 2011).

Parental separation changes living arrangements but critically it also unpacks the economic unit (Smyth & Weston 2000). The ‘fruits of complementary pursuits’ (Smyth 2005b: 8) common in traditional families (that is, the traditional division of labour based on the homemaker/breadwinner model) can no longer be shared when the family unit splits into two separate (bi-nuclear) units, with children the biological and emotional thread that join each.

¹ This is particularly pertinent in Australia as parents with shared or majority-time can still be liable under the Child Support Scheme, a situation not applicable in many other jurisdictions.

The remainder of this introduction is structured as follows. The first section provides a brief background to the Australian Child Support Scheme (hereafter ‘the Scheme’) and administrative data on liable mother cases. The second section outlines policies and social trends which potentially affect the number of liable mothers covered by the Scheme. The third section outlines the limited data on compliance by gender. The final section sets out the research questions and theoretical approach, and situates these within the broader child support policy context.

1.2 The Australian Child Support Scheme

The Australian Scheme was introduced in 1988, with administrative assessments commencing in October 1989. The reasons for its introduction were the high numbers of lone parents² receiving the Widows Pension or Supporting Parents Benefit and the need for savings on social security expenditure. The court system for setting and enforcing child maintenance orders was inadequate. Coverage of the lone parent population was limited and amounts ordered to be paid were low (at the time the ‘going rate’ was about \$20 a week) and rarely updated for costs of living increases. Amounts paid were even lower (see, for example, Cabinet Subcommittee on Maintenance 1986; Edwards, M, Howard & Miller 2001; Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support 2005). Some scholars argue that government savings were the primary motivator (Heron 1987; Ingleby 1994; Klinger 1988). Others assert that concern for children living in poverty in lone parent families, highlighted in influential the mid-1980s Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) research on financial consequences of divorce (McDonald 1986), was equally important (Fehlberg & Maclean 2009; Harding & Szukalska 2000; Ridge 2005). After extensive consultation, the Hawke Labor government determined that child maintenance should be based on a simple formula, be administratively rather than judicially determined,

² The term ‘lone’ parent/mother/father is used in Chapter 1 in a historical context: generally when one parent had ‘sole care’ after separation and the other parent had limited (if any) involvement.

and collected via automatic withholding using the taxation system (Edwards, M, Howard & Miller 2001).

Concern about low receipt of maintenance centred on lone mothers who were more likely than lone fathers to receive the Sole Parent Benefit and to remain on income support for longer (Cass 1993; Lambert 1992). Nonresident mothers were rarely expected to pay, with the limited 1980s research involving lone fathers noting nonresident mothers' unemployment or very low income as probable reasons (McClelland & Trethewey 1987; Wilson, J 1990). Two-thirds of lone fathers applied for maintenance³ with 29% successfully obtaining an order or agreement compared with 74% of lone mothers (AIFS data cited in Child Support Evaluation Advisory Group 1992: 129-130). Less than 2% of fathers on the Sole Parent Benefit received maintenance, although the rate for lone mothers was also low, at around 20–25% (Raymond 1987: 59).

1.2.1 ***The original Scheme***

The original Scheme was based on a modified continuity of expenditure principle. Put simply, 'wherever possible children should enjoy the benefit of a similar proportion of parental income to that which they would have enjoyed if their parents lived together' (Child Support Consultative Group 1988: 67).

The basic formula required liable parents (mostly fathers) to pay a percentage of taxable income after a self-support component was deducted. The amount payable depended on the number of children. The resident parent's income reduced the liability where it exceeded a relatively high threshold, equal to average weekly earnings for all employees (\$45,505 in 2008). Prior to 1999, parents with an income below the self-support amount were not required to pay.⁴ The fixed

³ Until 1988 maintenance payments paid to women for children were not taxed whereas any maintenance payment received by men incurred a tax liability. According to Berns (1993), this represents both the improbability of the payment and its ideological incongruity. If a man received maintenance, the Tax Office considered this as a wage for work unlike mothers who had a moral obligation to provide care as part of their mothering role.

minimum assessment was \$5 per week, subsequently indexed for inflation from July 2006, payable where a child lived mainly with one parent (70% of time or more, hereafter ‘majority-time’). Lower percentages applied for parents from 30% of nights (hereafter ‘shared-time’) with no minimum payment required. For shared-time, and where siblings were split between parents (that is, each parent had majority-time with at least one child,⁵ hereafter ‘split-residence’), both parents could apply for an assessment and the net amount payable, if any, determined the liable parent.

1.2.2 ***The revised Scheme***

The Scheme remained largely unchanged until major reforms in 2006–2008 based on recommendations from an independent Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support (2005). This review was in response to a parliamentary report on child custody arrangements in the event of family separation, known as *Every Picture Tells a Story* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs 2003). The Taskforce recommended reforms to the Scheme to reflect substantial changes in Australian society since 1988. The Taskforce was motivated by a concern that ‘children need parents who will provide more than just financial support for them...Arguments about money, or concerns about the fairness of the...Scheme...get in the way of...cooperation’ (Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support 2005: 42).

Since 1 July 2008, liabilities are calculated using a formula based on an ‘income shares’ approach and revised estimates of the cost of children in Australia. The Cost of Children Table reflects that older children cost more than younger children; the proportion of income spent on children reduces at higher incomes; and parents who have 52–127 nights a year (hereafter ‘regular-time’)⁶ incur costs for infrastructure. The liability reflects the income and care percentages of both parents with more

⁵ Split-residence includes one or more children in shared-time and a sibling in majority-time with their father or their mother.

⁶ The official term is ‘regular care’. Here ‘regular time’ is used because of the loaded meanings of the word ‘care’ in the context of post-separation parenting.

shared time leading to less child support transferred and more spending directly on children. Low income parents with regular-time are not required to pay the minimum assessment. Shared-time applies from 35% of nights (128 or more nights), up from the previous 30% (110 or more nights).

The Scheme is administered by the Department of Human Services under its Child Support Program (CSP), previously the Child Support Agency (CSA).⁷ In 2014–15, there were 789,500 cases covering around 1.2 million children (Department of Social Services 2015).

1.2.3 ***Scheme coverage***

For reasons of equity and efficiency, the Scheme is open to all parents (Cabinet Subcommittee on Maintenance 1986: 20)⁸ with official estimates of coverage between 85–90% (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs 2003: 127) and 94% of separated parents (Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support 2005). The high coverage of separated parents in Australia is most likely related to the rules governing eligibility for family assistance payments (this is discussed in further detail in Section 1.3.1). Most parents in the Child Support Scheme have an administrative assessment. A small group (3% of the caseload in 2008, Child Support Agency 2009b) have a formal agreement registered by the Agency. Just over half of payees collect payments privately (hereafter ‘Private Collect’) and the Department of Human Services collects and disburses payments for the remainder (hereafter ‘Child Support Collect’). These groups are not fixed, with movement between collection methods depending on payee choice and circumstances (for example, acrimony or non-compliance).

⁷ The Child Support Agency (CSA) was fully integrated into the Department of Human Services from July 2011. CSA or Child Support Program (CSP) are used in this thesis as appropriate. Child support policy is the responsibility of the Department of Social Services (DSS), formerly the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), while service related matters are the responsibility of the Department of Human Services (DHS).

⁸ The *Family Law Act 1975* (s 66E) prevents a court from making an order for child support where children are covered by the *Child Support (Assessment) Act 1989*, except in limited circumstances.

1.2.4 ***Liabile mothers: a small but growing group in the Scheme caseload?***

There is no reliable estimate of the prevalence of liable mothers.

According to official data the proportion of ‘payers’ in the CSA caseload who were female increased from 8.4% in 1996 (Child Support Agency 1996: 13) when data by gender were first reported, to 12.5% in 2009; the latest report. (The Department of Human Services ceased to publish annual data on the Scheme in 2009.)⁹ Although still a minority, this represented a 50% increase in the 10 years from 1999 to 2009. In addition, the CSA data highlight that the father applied to receive child support in 21–24% of newly registered cases in the years 2005 to 2009 (Child Support Agency 2009a: 27; Ellison 2007).

As shown in Table 1.1 below, as at June 2009 there were 103,109 ‘female payers’ in the overall Scheme caseload, that is active cases (those with a current assessment) and cases ended with arrears.

⁹ A CSA media release marking the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day in 2011 noted that the number of women paying child support was ‘the highest ever’ at 13% and ‘over 100,000’ (Child Support Agency 2011; Griffin 2011).

**Table 1.1 Percentage of female payers
in the CSA caseload 1996–2009**

Year	Percentage of payers who were female	Number of female payers
1996	8.4	Not stated
1997	7.7	33,848
1998	8.1	39,921
1999	8.4	44,336
2001	9.6	58,367
2002	10.0	65,393
2003	10.3	69,114
2004	10.6	75,438
2005	10.9	79,552
2006	11.1	86,600
2007	11.4	91,233
2008	11.6	93,432
2009	12.5	103,109

Notes: Data compiled from *CSA Facts and Figures*. Data are as at June each year. Data include ‘active cases’ (those with an assessment including those with no current liability) and cases ended with arrears. Data for 2009 include 40,000 mirror cases administratively created by the CSA to implement the 2008 reforms.

Although official data suggest an increase in liable mothers, data reflected in Table 1.1 are not straightforward. If split-residence or shared-time apply, both parents can, and may be required to, register with the CSP. (Section 1.3.1 details the policy underpinning this.) Parents in reciprocal cases¹⁰, where the liability in one case is the reverse of the other (hereafter ‘mirror cases’), are officially counted in caseload data as *both* payees and payers (Bowen 2010; Child Support Agency 2011). Importantly, they are counted even if they have no current liability, that is, the assessment results in neither parent being required to pay in the current child support period. In May 2008 there were 30,000 mirror cases with no current liability (Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2008).¹¹ In July 2008, an additional 40,000 cases were administratively created to cover parents

¹⁰ Under the previous (pre-July 2008) Scheme, reciprocal cases occurred when both parents applied for child support. The same children are in each case. Each parent is the ‘payee’ in one case and the ‘payer’ in the other, hence the term ‘reciprocal cases’.

¹¹ These cases are counted as active as the case includes an eligible child—a change in income or parenting time could result in an amount of child support payable.

with split-residence or shared-time who had not previously applied for an assessment (Child Support Agency 2009a).¹²

The unavailability of trend data (or any annual Scheme data) since 2009, and lack of an accepted definition of ‘payer’, highlight a research gap and the challenges of identifying liable mothers for this study. (This is discussed further in Chapter 4.) In addition, the percentage of liable parents who are mothers and who are *ever* liable during the life of the case is larger than the percentage at a single point-in-time.

1.2.5 ***Child Support Scheme data***

Little information is provided about liable mothers in official data other than percentage of liable parents by gender (see Table 1.1) and collection method. To provide some context to the present study, Table 1.2 shows Child Support Agency caseload data at June 2008. (2008 data are presented to match the Child Support Reform Study data used in the present study.) Table 1.2 details parenting-time using the parenting-time categories ‘sole’¹³, ‘substantial’, ‘shared’ and ‘major care’ as defined in the original Scheme. (Hereafter ‘time’ is used instead of ‘care’ for reasons detailed previously.) As in Table 1.1, active cases include those with no current liability.

¹² From July 2008 a ‘case’ is defined as ‘the administrative assessments for child support for all children who are the children of both parents of the child’ (Section 5 of the *Child Support (Assessment) Act 1989*). Administratively this meant that split-residence and shared-time arrangements required two cases.

¹³ The use of the term ‘sole’ reflects the official terminology and is not intended to imply that the other parent is uninvolved.

**Table 1.2 Original Child Support
Scheme: number of cases by nights with
payee per year (June 2008)**

Category	Percentage of nights	Number of nights	Cases with payees in this category: June 2008 (%)
Substantial	30–39.9	110–145	0.7
Shared	40–59.9	146–219	6.8
Major	60–69.9	220–255	3.2
Sole	70 or more	256 or more	89.3
Total			100.0

Notes: Data on percentage of cases in each category are based on Table 2.9 from *Facts and Figures 2007/08* (Child Support Agency 2009b: 25) and includes cases ended with arrears, no current liability, and mirror cases.

The payee had sole time in 89% of cases. Most (90%) cases involved one or two children. Few parents had other children for whom they received relevant dependant allowance: 8% of cases involved new or another previous relationship child. The average liability for active cases (excluding international and pre-1989 court order cases) was \$4,284 and \$6,272 if minimum liability and no current liability cases were excluded. In 2008, 57% of cases had liabilities above the minimum assessment (\$339). The median annual taxable income of all payers with active cases was \$38,660 with 22% in receipt of government payments (Child Support Agency 2009b: 25–31). Private Collect applied to 52% of active cases. Female payers comprised 11.6% of all payers with active cases and those ended with arrears and 12.5% of Private Collect cases (Child Support Agency 2009b).

1.3 Policy and social trends

Several policy and social trends could affect the proportion of liable mothers in the Scheme caseload—either individually or combined—and include trends previously noted as contributing to changes in post-separation parenting over time (Smyth & Moloney 2008). These are discussed below.

1.3.1 ***Government policies and low-income parents***

The size and composition of the child support caseload in Australia reflects the interaction between the legislation applying to child support and that applying to family assistance. Legislation is informed by the policy position of the government of the day about the appropriate balance between private and public contribution to the cost of children.

Payments to low income families increased in amount and coverage between the mid-1980s and mid-2000s; an increase of around 250% in real terms since the introduction of the Scheme (Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs 2006: 15). By OECD standards, assistance to families in Australia is generous (Whiteford 2013). Assistance for lone parent households is the second highest in the OECD in absolute terms, and relative to median incomes (Whiteford & Adema 2006).

Family Tax Benefit Part A (hereafter 'FTB'), the main means-tested payment for families with dependent children, is a per child payment set at a level sufficient to meet the direct costs of raising children in families wholly dependent on government payments (Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support 2005). FTB is paid to low income parents whether on government payments or in work, with a base amount for middle income families, usually paid fortnightly. An estimated 75% of families are eligible, with only high income families excluded (McDonald 2008). In couple families FTB is paid to the 'primary carer' usually the mother, and is often the sole income for mothers not in paid employment. (An additional payment, FTB Part-B, is made to sole-earner households.)

The economics of separation mean that low income parents with resident children are entitled to higher government payments after separation than when partnered. This provides incentives for parents to promptly notify Centrelink¹⁴ of their separation. To receive more than the base rate

¹⁴ Centrelink is the agency managing government payments. Centrelink is part of the Department of Human Services. An appointment with Centrelink to organise post-separation financial support such as Parenting Payment Single or more than the base

of FTB¹⁵, parents with at least 30% time (35% from 1 July 2008), must take ‘reasonable action’ to receive child support. The Maintenance Action Test (hereafter ‘the MAT’) requires an application for an administrative assessment or acceptance of a child support agreement by the Child Support Program.¹⁶ Crucially, the MAT applies even if an assessment will result in no current liability. Child support reduces FTB by 50 cents for each dollar above a free area until base rate.¹⁷

Consequently, while only compulsory for Sole Parent Pensioners in the early years of the Scheme, the wider coverage of FTB has increased the numbers of parents required to register for child support. This highlights the strong link between child support and family assistance. In 2014, 82% of payees received FTB and of the 1.5 million families who received payments, 40% had a child support child¹⁸ (Department of Social Services & Department of Human Services 2014). Between 1999 and July 2008 FTB could be split where parents had at least 10% time. FTB is worth substantially more than child support for low income parents, and includes benefits such as a health care card and rental assistance.

FTB increases money available *within* households while child support moves money *between* households. Entitlement to more than the base rate can affect decisions made on parenting arrangements at separation and after, and which parent takes the ‘primary carer’ and ‘primary earner’ roles (or whether roles and FTB are shared), and therefore which parent is liable. Family payments policy forms a significant backdrop to

rate of FTB is one of the first steps in the separation process for many resident parents.

¹⁵ At the time of this study (2008) the base rate of FTB was \$48.30 a fortnight. The maximum rate of FTB for a child aged 13–15 years was \$196.84 per fortnight payable on an annual income up to \$44,552. The maximum rate reduced by 20c for each dollar above \$44,552 until it reached base rate. Base rate was paid on an annual income up to \$94,316. <<http://guides.dss.gov.au/family-assistance-guide/3/6/1>> (viewed 4 June 2017).

¹⁶ Prior to 1 July 2008, agreements had to be at least the assessed amount if the payee received more than base rate FTB. Parents have 13 weeks from the date of separation, birth of the child or change in parenting arrangements to meet the MAT. The MAT applies unless a full or partial exemption is granted (for example, where a payee is assessed by a Centrelink Social Worker as at risk of violence if payment is pursued).

¹⁷ For more details about family assistance in Australia and historical payment rates and thresholds <<http://guides.dss.gov.au/family-assistance-guide/3/6>> (viewed 7 July 2017)

¹⁸ That is, the person receiving FTB was either a liable parent, a payee or partner of a liable parent/payee.

child support as changes to FTB can influence decision-making even where parents do not have correct knowledge of the rules (Smyth et al. 2012).

The symbiotic relationship between FTB and child support makes it particularly important in low income households. There is a ‘clear and strong income gradient’ in separation rates (Bradbury & Norris 2005: 442); lower income couples are more likely to separate. Because of assortative mating, that is, ‘partnering of individuals with more traits in common than likely through random partnering’ (Worner 2006: 3)¹⁹, in many cases child support involves transfer of money between low income households.

Mothers with resident children and no partner frequently move between casual, low paid jobs and income support (Baxter, Jennifer & Renda 2011; Gregory 2002; Tannous & Smith 2013). Welfare-to-work policies, introduced in Australia in 2006, require part-time workforce participation by parents receiving Parenting Payment once their youngest child turns six. Census data show a subsequent increase in employment among mothers with a youngest child aged 8–15 years who were not living with a partner (Baxter, Jennifer 2013a). While policy impacts of welfare-to-work on payee mothers have been examined (Summerfield et al. 2010), consequences for liable mothers remain unexplored.

How ‘income’ is defined for child support purposes is relevant. When the minimum liability was introduced in 1999, it could only be reduced to nil (that is, no current liability) if a parent’s annual ‘personal income’ was below \$260. Unlike income used for assessments generally, personal income for this purpose included tax-exempt disability pensions; allowances made to prisoners for personal needs; and child-specific payments such as FTB. Liable mothers were more affected by including FTB than fathers as more mothers had resident children and no partner

¹⁹ Usually measured by education qualification.

or were ‘dependent’ spouses with FTB as their sole personal income (Vnuk 2000).²⁰

1.3.2 ***Children living apart from their mother***

The number of children in Australia living apart from their mother is increasing. In 1997, 12% of children with a parent living elsewhere did not live with their mother, rising to 16% in 2003, 18% in 2006–07, 19% in 2009–10 and 21% by 2012–13 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997, 2004, 2008, 2011, 2015). Although not high compared with children living apart from their father, it is more common in older age groups. Around 4% of 10–14 year olds and 6% of 15–17 year olds lived mainly with their father in 2009–10 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

Rates are higher among recent cohorts (Maguire 2011). Changes made to the *Family Law Act 1975* and associated service reform in 2006 promote meaningful involvement of children with both parents wherever safe to do so (see s 60CC (2)). Data from 10,000 parents who separated after these reforms (Kaspiew et al. 2009) indicate an increase in children living mainly with their father in all age ranges, peaking at 17% among 15–17 year olds (Kaspiew 2010: 119). Census data indicate an increase of 14% in lone father households between 2006 and 2011 (albeit from a low base); a growth rate twice that of lone mother households, with the fastest growing group those with all children 15 years or younger (Salt 2013b).

Around one-in-five fathers (18–19%) are ‘successful’ in contested court cases (i.e., where parents are unable to agree on parenting arrangements) based on data collected since the 2006 family law reforms.²¹ In 2007–08, fathers gained majority-time in 17% of litigated cases (Family Court of

²⁰ Although child-specific payments are no longer counted as income, the introduction of a minimum assessment had the perverse outcome that partnered mothers with no *personal* income yet lived in the highest income households could seek an exemption. These mothers were ineligible for means-tested FTB although their husbands received a personal tax concession for a dependent spouse (Vnuk 2000).

²¹ See data on contested Family Court cases at Figure 4 in Smyth, Chisholm, Rodgers & Son (2014: 134), Table 6.4 in Kaspiew et al. (2009:125) and Table 3.30 in Kaspiew, Carson, Qu, Horsfall, Tayton, Moore, Coulson & Dunstan (2015: 62) where data cover the Family Court, the Federal Circuit Court and the WA Family Court.

Australia 2009: 2). Customised tables from the Family Court for the period 2007–08 to 2011–12 discussed in Smyth, Chisholm, Rodgers and Son (2014) indicate that fathers were awarded majority-time more frequently than shared-time in contested cases. Although only five per cent of cases require judicial determination, these are the most intractable, characterised by mental health concerns, and/or allegations of domestic violence or child abuse (Perkins 2016). Where an order is made for the father to have majority-time, issues of parenting capacity are often present (Family Court of Australia 2009; Moloney 2001a). Less complex cases are heard in the Federal Circuit Court who handle the bulk of cases. Recent data for this jurisdiction (covering 2009–10 to 2013–14) from Kaspiew, Carson, Qu and others (2015) show a comparable trend to the Family Court data.

Fathers may have majority-time by agreement. Fathers in couple families are more involved than past generations (see, for example, Craig, Mullan & Blaxland 2010; Smyth et al. 2013). An estimated 10% of families have a ‘stay-at-home dad’ (Fletcher 2011) by choice or because of unemployment (Salt 2013a; Smyth et al. 2013). Fathers with greater amounts of time with their child post-separation reported higher pre-separation involvement in their child’s day-to-day activities (Kaspiew et al. 2009: 147).

1.3.3 ***Shared-time***²²

A related trend is shared-time. Already rising before the 2006 family law reforms (Smyth, Chisholm et al. 2014; Weston et al. 2011), shared-time (here defined as 35–65%) substantially increased in all judicially determined cases from 2% pre–2006 to 13%; from 4% to 34% where the hours were specified; and in consent cases from 17% to 22% (Kaspiew et al. 2009: 132–133).

²² Consistent with prior studies in the US and Australia (for example, Baker & Townsend 1996; Melli & Brown 2008; Smyth et al. 2014) ‘shared-time’ is defined here as arrangements that involve children spending at least 30% of time with each parent, unless otherwise specified.

Using a 30% parenting time threshold, 7% of children in separated families had shared-time in 2009–10 with 3% in equal-time arrangements (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). Shared-time was higher in the Scheme active caseload at 12.8% (Child Support Agency 2009a) and 17% of newly registered cases in June 2008 (Smyth 2009). However, Smyth, Chisholm, Rodgers and Son (2014) using customised Child Support Program data indicate that shared-time has plateaued at 15–16% of children of recently separated parents.

It is unclear what trends in shared-time may mean for liable-mother cases. Shared-time has a greater impact in Australia as it is one of a few countries where equal-time can create a liability (Skinner & Davidson 2009). Liability is determined by the interaction of time and income of both parents and mothers with shared-time typically are tertiary educated, in paid work with relatively high personal incomes (Cashmore et al. 2010: 27; Kaspiew et al. 2009; Smyth 2005a).

1.3.4 ***Parental employment***

Although the common pattern in Australia is for one parent to work full-time and the other part-time, in around one-third of couple families with children aged 12–17 both parents work full-time (Baxter, Jennifer 2013b). The employment rate of mothers increased from 59% to 66% for partnered mothers and 46% to 60% for lone mothers between 1997 and 2009 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010). Two opposing trends are relevant to socioeconomic status and parenting, with decreases in paid employment and income for men more evident among working class families and a move towards a ‘symmetrical breadwinner model’ (Broomhill & Sharp 2005: 114) with both parents working in higher income jobs in more affluent families. A mother’s participation choices are shaped by her partner’s work hours (Williams 2010) at both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum. Further female breadwinners (that is, where the mother was the higher income earner) are more common among low and middle income dual-earner couples: 25–27% had a female breadwinner in 2011 (Cassells et al. 2013).

Majority-time fathers report lower education and employment (Kaspiew et al. 2009: 141). The shift towards less stable employment for men could provide an incentive for separated fathers who were at home caring for children pre-separation to claim government payments that rely on the presence of young children in the household rather than on irregular wages from casual employment (Hunter 2005). In 2009, among fathers with a child aged under 15 years, 55% of lone fathers and 85% of partnered fathers were in full-time employment and 15% and 6% in part-time employment (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010).

The labour force participation rate of mothers is particularly relevant for child support systems such as in Australia where both parents' incomes are considered. Policy changes such as those under the 2006 welfare-to-work reforms increased the employment rate among lone parents, especially lone mothers; 56% of lone mothers were in paid employment in 2016 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017). The employment rate of lone fathers is also key with 72% of lone fathers in paid employment in 2016 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017). Another reason that employment is critical to the assessment is that a separated mother who is not in paid employment would not be liable in split-residence and shared-time cases unless she had other (non-employment) income above the self-support amount (Vnuk 2000). Under the original Scheme she would be liable for the minimum assessment if she had less than 30% time.²³

1.3.5 ***Scheme caseload complexity and fluidity***

Change affects many separated families (Caruana & Ferro 2004), precipitated by instability and conflict or signalling flexibility to children's developmental needs (see, for example, Smyth 2009; Trinder 2010). A change in parenting-time of one or more children can cause a change in the parent who is liable in the child support case (hereafter 'churn'). Churn can occur without a corresponding change in nights if the relativity between parents' incomes changes.

²³ Under the revised Scheme the minimum liability would apply to a mother with income below the self-support amount if she had less than 14% time of all the children in the case.

The quantum of churn in the Scheme caseload and the impact on the number of mothers who have been the liable parent at any time has not been explored. Nonetheless, based on data on stability of different parenting arrangements, churn outward (that is, a change from being liable to being a payee or having no current liability) and movement in the opposite direction (from payee to liable parent) is probably more common for liable-mother cases than in typical cases: those with children mainly with their mother. Arrangements where the father has majority-time, split-residence and shared-time appear less stable (Cashmore et al. 2010; Kaspiew et al. 2009; Smyth & Moloney 2008; Smyth et al. 2008). This observation was confirmed by data from the AIFS *Looking Back Survey*—a retrospective study of 2,002 parents who separated in 2005 and formed the pre-family law reform cohort for the AIFS evaluation. That study found that the most stable parenting arrangements four to five years after separation were those where the mother had majority-time, followed by equal time. Less durable arrangements were where the father had majority-time and unequal shared-time where the mother had more nights (Kaspiew et al. 2009: 127). Analysis of three waves of data from the Longitudinal Study of Separated Families (LSSF) (Qu et al. 2014) found unequal shared-time where the father had more nights was the least stable.

Smyth and colleagues (2008) highlight the move of children over time from shared-time to living mainly with their mother (hereafter ‘maternal drift’, see Brown, Joung & Berger 2006). In the US, research by Brown, Joung and Berger (2006) and Administrative Office of the Courts, California research (Administrative Office of the Courts California 2000) indicated ‘paternal drift’ from shared-time was almost as frequent as maternal drift. A similar pattern appears to apply to recent cohorts of separated families in Australia (Lodge & Alexander 2011; Weston et al. 2011). Changes in parenting arrangements could create a liability for a mother who was previously the payee in the case.

Longitudinal research suggests that mothers have shorter spells as the liable parent than fathers. Comparing across waves of LSSF data, 37% of

mothers liable in 2008 were not liable one year later (Qu & Weston 2010: 120). By five years later, half of the 2008 liable mothers were no longer liable. In contrast, 87% of fathers remained liable across all three waves (Qu et al. 2014: 120).

1.3.6 ***Changes to the Scheme***

While the policies and social trends detailed above could lead to an increase in liable mothers, the 2006–08 changes to the Scheme might counteract potential increases. For example, some minority-time mothers who were liable for the minimum amount under the original rules could be reassessed to have no current liability if they have regular-time with at least one former relationship child. The distributional analyses of the impact of the 2008 child support formula changes and FTB produced by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b) reported on paying and receiving parents in the Child Support Agency caseload. They estimated that 51% of liable parents would experience a net gain, 33% a net loss and 16% no change (Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2008: 4). Their analysis reflected the combined impact of child support and FTB changes as it was ‘not possible to isolate the effect of any one feature...independently...[and] will be dependent on the “mix” of formula components...relevant to their circumstances’ (Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2008: 3).

Smyth and Henman (2010) highlighted that specific subgroups of liable parents had different net outcomes compared with the liable parent population overall. Net gains tended to be associated with policy reforms that benefited higher income parents: reduction of the income cap on payments and the new Cost of Children Table. In contrast, 66% of parents with second families were expected to have a net loss. No change was expected for the 45% of liable parents receiving government payments but Smyth and Henman found 35% faced a net loss; marginally higher than for the overall liable parent population (Smyth & Henman 2010: 21).

While the general conclusion in the research and commentary on the reforms was that fathers ‘gained’ and mothers ‘lost’ (see, for example, Cook, K & Natalier 2013; Karvelas 2006; Peatling 2006; Wardill 2006), this was premised on fathers being liable parents. However, as Smyth and Henman (2010: 26) highlight: ‘The child support policy arena is one in which gender and socio-economic status can intersect in complex ways’.

1.3.6.1 *Prevalence of liable mothers in other countries*

The type of child support system in place could influence the prevalence of liable mothers. Australia, like New Zealand, Denmark, Norway and UK, is classified as having an agency-based child support system (Skinner, Bradshaw & Davidson 2007). Countries with agency-based systems have higher rates of liable mothers than countries with discretionary court-based systems.²⁴ UK is the exception. While cultural and policy differences and measurement issues make comparisons with other countries risky, official data suggest Australia could be like Nordic countries where more fathers have majority or shared-time. In Sweden 18.5% of liable parents are mothers (Hiilamo 2006) and in Norway 13% of payees are fathers (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011: 226). New Zealand data indicate that 18% of liable parents are mothers (Birks 2011), making it the only comparable English-speaking Western country.

In contrast, resident fathers in the US have significantly lower rates of child support orders than resident mothers (29% compared with 53%) with 2011 data revealing a decrease from a peak of 42% in 1993 (Grall 2013). In the UK the proportion of nonresident mothers registered with the CSA has always been small (for example, 5% in 2008, see Brennan 1999).²⁵ Canadian data tell a similar story, with mothers comprising 4%

²⁴ Some countries have no provision for mothers to be liable or recently changed their laws to extend child support liability to mothers (see, for example Israel, Yaron 2015).

²⁵ In the UK nonresident mothers have been described as ‘a hidden population’ reluctant to reveal their role because of ‘perceived social stigma’ (Corlyon et al. 2009: 12).

of liable parents (Sinha 2014), probably because fathers with more time have higher incomes (Juby, Le Bourdais & Marcil-Gratton 2005).

1.4 **Child support compliance**

As noted earlier, assertions that mothers do not pay child support in Australia when they should are based on anecdotal evidence with little empirical data to confirm or refute this view. Much depends on whose responses are reported (for example, payees only) and what is being measured.

The strictest measure of compliance is payment in full and on time. In Australia this measurement is not as straightforward as in other English-speaking Western countries. First, Private Collect is a flexible arrangement allowing formal and informal trade-offs. Second, liable parents with Child Support Collect have some control over payments: prescribed in-kind payments such as school fees, essential medical expenses and the payee's housing costs can count for up to 30% of the liability without requiring agreement. Agreed in-kind payments are credited in full. Third, official Child Support Program data are an amalgam of actual payments made via Child Support Collect and an assumed 100% compliance in Private Collect (more than half the caseload). Timeliness is rarely reported.

In contrast compliance research is dominated by US studies where flexibility is limited, meaning only formal payments are measured.

1.4.1 ***Compliance by gender: administrative data***

Virtually all of what we know about the compliance of liable mothers is from snippets in newspaper reports based on ad-hoc media releases from CSA.²⁶ Non-payment of child support is regularly portrayed in the media as male behaviour. A previous Minister for Human Services famously declared war on 'deadbeat and negligent dads...who are ripping off...their

²⁶ Although newspaper reports are not a strong source of evidence, no other sources of compliance rates using administrative data are available. For example, CSA Facts and Figures 2008–09—the most recent comprehensive report of CSA data—only reports on the percentage of payers and payees who are female; all other data are aggregated figures.

own flesh and blood’ (House of Representatives 2006: 176). Following complaints of gender bias, official data releases use gender-neutral language, although the media tend to ignore this by highlighting ‘deadbeat dads’. The media focus on non-compliant fathers is unsurprising as they comprise most liable parents.

The Department of Human Services does not routinely collect administrative data on compliance by gender. Limited data by gender produced for media requests are point-in-time snapshots pertaining to Child Support Collect debt. The earliest report (Haberfield & Wright 2006) noted that ‘nine out of ten non-payers are dads’. It is unclear if this was a comparison of debts owed by mothers and fathers or reflected the gender split for liable parents in the caseload (then 90% male). In a December 2008 report, 27% of mothers and 35% of fathers had a debt, with around 10,000 mothers owing more than the annual minimum assessment (\$340) and 14,700 owing less (Packham 2008). In June 2009, *Today Tonight* (a tabloid style ‘current affairs’ television program) presented a story reputedly about ‘serial mothers’, announcing that 22,000 mothers owed about \$30 million, with \$11 million of the debt due from mothers who had ‘left Australia’. The ‘top targets’ were described as ‘10 Victorian women who had four children each with four different partners and who don’t look after their children and don’t pay a cent’ (Main 2009, 15 June).²⁷

The most recent newspaper report examining gender and compliance (May 2010) indicates 20.9% of mothers and 33.5% of fathers had a child support debt (Karvelas 2010b). These figures are difficult to interpret as they suggest a smaller proportion of mothers in Child Support Collect cases had a debt than fathers but this assumes that the percentage of mothers and fathers with a debt was calculated from the total number of parents with a positive liability excluding cases with no current liability.

²⁷ The quality of the data on which this story was based were highly questionable.

Whether mothers are less compliant than fathers remain unclear, particularly when what is being measured lacks detail. Clarity in measurement and reporting matter: payment (that is, any money transferred) and compliance (that is, expected amount of child support paid in full, or in full *and* on time) are not the same. For example, US census data indicate that resident fathers are less likely to be *paid* child support than resident mothers (Grall 2011) but other studies focusing on non-payment of *liabilities* using administrative data show that mothers had comparable compliance to fathers (Hall, Passarella & Born 2014) and lower rates of being in arrears (Myers, D 2004). Administrative data from New Zealand Inland Revenue reflect a similar view: 18% of liable parents were mothers in 2010 but 16.5% of parents with debt were mothers (Birks 2011).

1.4.2 ***Compliance by gender: survey data***

Empirical data on compliance by gender in Australia are limited because of the small sample size of liable mothers and payee fathers. The research on compliance is itself minimal (see Smyth, Vnuk et al. 2014 for a review of the Australian compliance research), with pre-2008 work reliant on payees', rather than liable parents', reports.

Fathers report lower receipt than mothers. Qu and Weston (2008: 28) compared several datasets collected between 2003 and 2006²⁸ and found 18–46% of resident fathers (range $n=72-109$) reported receiving child support. The rate depended on the question asked. Two survey questions referred to *payment* while the other measured compliance (here, paid in full and on time). The authors suggested one explanation for lower receipt was the higher likelihood mothers had a child of the relationship living with them and therefore were not liable to pay.

In the one report that differentiated receipt by gender and repartnering status (de Vaus 2004), repartnered fathers had lower receipt than

²⁸ The dataset examined were the Housing, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) 2004, the Australian Bureau of Statistics Family Characteristics Survey 2003 and the Australian Institute of Family Studies General Population of Parents Survey (GPPS) 2006.

repartnered mothers. Eighteen per cent of lone father families, 6% of stepmother families and 2% of blended families (i.e., with a stepmother and a new child) reported receipt of financial support. Although this suggests that a lower proportion of repartnered fathers received any support than lone fathers (and mothers whether repartnered or not), this finding should be treated as tentative because of the small number of stepmother families surveyed.

In the limited research restricted to cases where child support was expected and both liable and payee parents were asked, payee fathers reported the lowest compliance and liable fathers the highest, with the two groups of mothers in the middle. Based on three waves of data, 73% of liable fathers reported paying in full and on time compared with 59% of liable mothers in 2008 (Kaspiew et al. 2009: 195), 55% in 2009 (Qu & Weston 2010: 124) and 60% in 2012 (Qu et al. 2014: 124).

In summary, the limited survey data provide basic information on compliance, with analysis constrained by the scope of questions asked about child support and/or small sample size for liable mothers.

1.4.3 ***Why compliance matters***

Money matters for children's wellbeing. Poor financial circumstances can affect outcomes for children in separated families (Pryor & Rodgers 2001). Child support reduces poverty (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011)—either directly or via the MAT which links registration of a child support case with payment of the often larger and more valuable FTB. Further, as mentioned earlier, there is a symbiotic relationship between FTB (tax-payer funded) and child support (parental funded) payments for children. Compliance in full and on time reduces taxpayer expenditure on children in separated families.

But child support should not be viewed solely through a poverty lens. The impact on child wellbeing extends beyond its monetary value. Although at low liabilities it is largely symbolic rather than meeting the cost of children, for poor families even small amounts make a difference. Children view both time and money as symbolising caring (Haugen 2003)

and fathers view payment of child support as ‘substantially improving their children’s quality of life’ (Natalier & Hewitt 2010: 496).

Child support legislation is gender-neutral. Studies examining attitudes to child support reveal almost universal agreement for the principle that parents have primary responsibility to financially support their children (see for example, Braver, Ellman & MacCoun 2014; Child Support Agency 1999; Funder 1998; Funder & Smyth 1996a, 1996b; Smyth & Weston 2005). This view applies regardless of the gender of the nonresident parent and is particularly strong in Australia for nonresident mothers’ obligations.

The Child Support Agency’s (2010: 4) compliance policy lists four key factors influencing a parent’s ability or motivation to comply: (i) the relationship between parents and level of cooperation, (ii) the parent–child relationship and time, (iii) attitude to the Scheme, particularly beliefs about fairness; and (iv) financial situation and regularity of employment. But this is based on research with resident mothers and nonresident fathers. Behavioural responses to ostensibly gender-neutral laws could be influenced by gender norms and expectations for mothers and fathers.

Can compliance be unaffected by gender? Some reasons for non-compliance such as uncertainty about parentage are exclusively male concerns. Importantly, children who never lived with both parents are rarely in shared- or majority-time father arrangements: most liable mothers were previously part of a family economic unit. Nonresident mothers spend more time with their children than nonresident fathers (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006; Headey & Warren 2008; Headey, Warren & Harding 2006; Smyth & Ferro 2002) and many have a child of the relationship in their household at least part-time.

Evidence for whether the nonresident parent role is experienced differently by gender is mixed with support for similarity in behaviours (see, for example, Doherty, Kouneski & Erickson 1998; Stewart 1999a; Thompson, R & Laible 1999; Wilson, G 2006) and specific differences by

gender (Hawkins, Amato & King 2006; Kielty 2005; Lyngstad 2010; Walker & McGraw 2000). However, this research focused on the shared experience of living apart from children rather than being liable to pay child support.

1.5 **Research questions and theoretical framework**

The aim of this thesis is to improve understanding of liable mothers and their compliance, and to inform child support policy more broadly. As it covers a group of separated parents not comprehensively studied in Australia to date, it is largely exploratory. Three research questions guided the present study:

Question 1: *“What are the characteristics of mothers with a child support liability in Australia and what are the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers?”*

Question 2: *“Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?”*

Question 3: *“What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?”*

Previous child support research is not very pertinent to these issues nor does it provide an obvious theoretical framework as a guide in answering these questions. Several theoretical frameworks have possible utility: social identity; planned behaviour; social exchange; and feminism. The first three have been advanced by Smyth (2004) as useful frameworks to explain paternal disengagement (of which non-compliance can be one facet). A brief explanation of these four frameworks and relevance to the present study follows.

Social identity theory relates to ‘the meanings associated with being a member of a social category’ (Stets & Burke 2000: 225). It has been classified as a ‘mini theory’ within the symbolic interaction framework (White & Klein 2008: 103). Identification with a social group is via ‘social categorisation, social comparison, social identity and self-esteem’ (Trepte 2006: 256). Individuals can have a range of identities (for example mother, wife, worker) with identities that are the most salient, dominant.

Individuals will spend time undertaking activities that represent a salient identity rather than those that relate to an identity that has less meaning for them (Pasley, Petren & Fish 2014). In this sense there is ‘a link between commitment to an identity [and] behaviour’ (Pasley, Petren & Fish 2014: 311).

A planned behaviour framework takes the view that ‘behaviour is guided by...beliefs about the likely consequences,...beliefs about the normative expectations of other people, and beliefs about the factors that may further or hinder performances of the behaviour’ (Ajzen 2002: 665). For example, in relation to non-compliance, this framework suggests that an individual weighs up whether they would expect to be penalised if they did not comply.

Exchange frameworks assume that individuals are ‘rational actors’ and interchangeable: individuals facing the identical situation would make the same choice (White & Klein 2008: 73). A social exchange framework can relate to the level of investment made in a relationship where ‘the more positive the reward–cost ratio, the more invested in the relationship the individual will be’ (Braver et al. 2005: 303). Other analysts have utilised a similar approach to child support payment that highlighted a relationship of ‘balanced reciprocity’ where money is exchanged for time (Bradshaw et al. 1999: 208).

A feminist²⁹ framework is based on ‘an organizing principle of men’s superiority and social, political and economic dominance over women’ (Whiteley 2014: 2). As Wood (1995: 104) explains, ‘the axis of feminist enquiry is gender, which consists of deeply ensconced social meanings and their derivative, power’. Women are expected to enact their role as a mother within the socially constructed ideology of a ‘good’ mother. A feminist approach to compliance requires a ‘gender lens’.³⁰ Gendered parental norms are likely to mean that separated mothers will continue

²⁹ It may be more correct to refer to ‘feminisms’ as there are a range of theoretical approaches under this broad umbrella with the shared tenet that ‘places gender inequality at the crux of social life’ (Palkovitz, Trask & Adamsons 2014: 412).

³⁰ In the present study ‘feminist approach’ and ‘gender lens’ are both used.

to ‘do gender’ (Natalier & Hewitt 2014), that is, be a ‘good’ mother. Consequently, it is likely that mothers’ non-compliance will differ from fathers’ non-compliance, both in rate and factors associated with this behaviour.

The present study seeks to establish whether gender matters for compliance, that is, whether there are key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers and their compliance with their child support liability and how this relates to gendered norms of mothering. Consequently, a feminist theoretical framework is preferred over the other three frameworks that fundamentally treat the individual ‘actor’ as gender-neutral and interchangeable. In particular, the present study takes a feminist theoretical framework and a quantitative methodology to answer the three research questions. (This is further discussed in the methodology chapter in Section 4.5.1.) Feminist approaches (which vary widely, including liberal, socialist, cultural, and radical³¹) explicitly seek to illuminate gender differences and highlight that ‘experiential and developmental trajectories differ by gender’ (Palkovitz, Trask & Adamsons 2014: 414). Further, as Fox and Murry (2000: 1168) point out in their literature review of family research, even when married couples describe their roles as non-gender specific ‘subtle power processes...[are] both visible and latent’.

Taking a gender lens to policy is an approach used by women’s groups in Australia to examine the specific impacts on women—both in policy development and when policy changes are proposed (see, for example, the post-budget analysis put out by the National Foundation for Australian Women in Coleman 2016, 2017). In addition, examination of gender and child support compliance has parallels with the research into more extreme areas of human behaviour. The consensus in criminology, for example, is that maleness and criminality go together and theories

³¹ See, for example, White and Klein (2008: 226–231) for details of the different feminist approaches generally and Doucet and Lee (2014) for different feminist approaches to mothering.

relevant to men are not applicable to women (Whiteley 2014).³² This somewhat more extreme parallel suggests that a feminist theoretical approach to understanding mothers' non-compliance is appropriate.

1.5.1 ***Gender and parenting***

Gender is a social status 'carefully constructed through prescribed processes of teaching, learning, emulation, and enforcement' (Lorber 1994: 17). As Lorber (1994: 32) explains, 'individuals produce gender [by] behaving in ways they have learned were appropriate for their gender status, or resisting or rebelling against these norms'.

It is not just men and women who are shaped by gender roles. Mothers and fathers are specifically affected: parenting is highly gendered. While some flexibility in gender roles occurs for those without children, the mother role remains rigid in Australia. Palkovitz, Trask and Adamsons (2014: 417), while noting role convergence in parenting, argue that 'important distinctions exist in affective and cognitive components of their parenting thus changing the meanings...processes and outcomes'.

Behavioural norms for 'good' mothers and 'good' fathers do differ. 'Intensive mothering' (or, as Arendell (1999) conceptualises it, 'hegemonic motherhood') is child-centred and ever present (Hays 1996). While this is a Western, white, middle-class view of mothering and thus less representative of other racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (see, for example, Bassin, Honey & Kaplan 1994; Christopher 2012; Collins 1994; Lim & Skinner 2012), it remains powerful. This is the case 'despite cultural contradictions and diverse arrangements and practices, [this view is] the normative standards, culturally and politically, by which mothering practices...are evaluated' (Arendell 2000: 1195).

Child support focuses on the 'provider' identity but breadwinning is experienced differently by gender (Stocks 2007). While 'a marker of masculinity' (Wilson, F & Stocks 2007: 96), providing is not essential to being a 'good' mother. Paid work may be central to a mother's personal

³² The 'doing gender' approach has been used in criminology research.

identity, but not central to her *gender identity* (Garcia 2012). Some mothers in paid employment may construct their notion of good mothering around providing both emotionally and economically for their children. Research suggests full-time employed mothers provide more and different care (Craig 2006; Doucet 2006). Some stigma lingers in Australia towards non-normative parental roles of breadwinner mother and homemaker father (Baxter, Janeen & Hewitt 2013). Where mothers are the sole income earner, they integrate their worker–mother identity to still see themselves as following intensive mothering (Johnston & Swanson 2007; Medved 2009). Conversely, stay-at-home fathers share caregiving rather than reverse roles. Responsibility for caregiving remains overwhelmingly women’s (Baxter, Jennifer 2017; Doucet 2013).

1.5.2 ***Gender and mothering post-separation***

Parenting in couple families is one area where men and women ‘do gender’ (West, C & Zimmerman 1987). Separation has the potential for ‘undoing’ (Deutsch 2007; Lorber 2000) or ‘redoing’ gender (Walzer 2008). Both personal and community expectations of gendered parenting roles are relevant. For parents receiving government payments as a ‘principal carer’ of children, some paid employment may be expected regardless of whether the full-time carer mother role was preferred as a couple family.

Parents who were already in employment before separation (particularly full-time) may opt for shared-time with international research suggesting that shared-time parents value their worker identity as highly as their parent role (Bakker & Karsten 2013).

1.5.3 ***Gender and money***

This thesis applies a gender lens to policy to improve the understanding of post-separation parenting and money. Feminist research on gender and money commonly focuses on the private world of money *within* relationships and households. Child support is explicitly about money *between* households. Nyman and Reinikainen (2007: 59) highlight the role of money in ‘doing couple’, by ‘blurring the line between *her* money and *his* money so that *their* money emerged’. In this sense, separation is

about disestablishing and disentangling (and perhaps distancing) themselves as a couple but not as co-parents.

Money is used ‘to create, define, affirm, represent, challenge or overturn...social ties’ (Zelizer 1998: 1378). Divorce generates its own distinct monies—alimony and child support—leading to new kinds of disputes over domestic monies and property, changing strategies for negotiating rights over economic resources and special guidelines on how those monies should be transferred (Zelizer 1989, 2006). Private agreements about allocation of resources within an intact family are not subject to external enforcement. Child support makes money a public issue—and a policy concern. Indeed, child support can be seen, at least in part, as ‘poor people’s money’ (Cuzzolino 2014: 16; Zelizer 1994).

Meanings attached to money differ because parenting is gendered. This is highlighted by liable fathers’ and payee mothers’ views on how child support should be spent (see, for example, Hewitt & Natalier 2010; McCarthy, Edwards & Gillies 2003; Natalier & Hewitt 2014; Simpson 1997). According to Skinner (2002: 7), the key to understanding *fathers’* non-payment is ‘to recognise the fundamental nature of financial obligations—that it is all about giving money’. Skinner argues that the obligation is more explicit than providing support within an ‘intact’ household as the requirement to transfer money, either directly to their former partner or via the CSA, disrupts the father’s provider role. (This approach assumes that the liable parent is the father.)

On the other hand, research with couple families reveals that mothers’ spending is more family-focused (Pahl 1995). Responsibility for child-related purchases mainly lies with mothers, often from their ‘personal’ spending money (see, for example, Goode, Callender & Lister 1998; Nyman 1999; Pahl 2000). Government benefits are more likely to be spent on children when paid to mothers (Lundberg, Pollak & Wales 1997; Woolley 2004). Even when physically absent such as in transnational families, mothers remit more money and more consistently than fathers do (Abrego 2009).

This suggests liable mothers would be *more* rather than *less* compliant because an integral part of the mother role is identifying with children's needs and putting them first. Further, women are generally more compliant with taxation law than men, although this may be less applicable for 'non-traditional' women and those with more education (for a review of the literature see Richardson & Sawyer 2001).

Feminist theorists critique both the gender-neutral assumptions of neoclassical economic models explaining compliance that centre on the 'rational man' (Wyss 1999) and whether economic models can apply to parent-child relationships. A gender-neutral model 'fails to recognize both love, which does not assume self-interest, and obligation, which exists despite self-interest' (Estin 1995: 1021). Gender norms of parenting and money are interlinked, therefore, as Cozzolino (2014: 7) explains, 'understanding the exchange of child support...illustrate[s] the meanings and mechanisms through which personal relationships and economics intertwine'.

This thesis explores the role of gender in child support compliance, and is informed by a feminist perspective of parenting as gendered and by economic sociology about the meaning of money in relationships. As Arendell (2000: 1202) points out: 'Feminist conceptual models...allow us to acknowledge the gendered character of mothering, as well as of most caregiving'. In the present study it is argued that post-separation, mothers continue to be influenced by gendered norms of parenting and the concept of the 'good' mother as the ever-present caregiver. If, as the present study argues, mothers 'judge and defend their own mothering according to dominant cultural themes' (Arendell 1999: 21), mothers' compliance behaviour will differ from fathers', both in rate and in the factors associated with this behaviour. The alternative is that if gender is not relevant then existing theories explaining fathers' non-compliance can apply equally to mothers.

1.5.4 ***Why this research matters for policy***

Child support can be described, to borrow Horst Rittel's phrase (Churchman 1967: B141), as a 'wicked problem': more socially than

technically complex. Unlike compliance with taxation or business regulations that only involve a client–regulator relationship, other relationships—between parents and parent–child—matter. Solutions to wicked problems require behavioural change rather than reliance on law and regulation (Australian Public Service Commission 2007; Fien & Wilson 2014; Head 2010). Further, ‘the policy design process should be fundamentally shaped by the defining characteristics and culture of the particular...group with whom the policy problem resides’ (Australian Public Service Commission 2009: 27).

We know how money operates in the ‘typical’ Australian post-separation family (although not everything) as liable-father cases comprise the bulk of cases, but knowledge of financial responsibilities among small groups such as liable mothers and payee fathers is negligible. There is policy value in studying ‘special populations’ (Smyth 2004; Vnuk 2010) not only because these groups could be larger in the future but also ‘sometimes what lies at the margins can be important for [understanding] what happens at the centre’ (Smyth & Wolcott 2004: 2).

Policy responses meant for all parents but reliant solely on evidence about fathers (albeit the largest group) risk being ineffectual for mothers. As Vnuk (2010: 73) asserts:

[I]t is necessary to explore whether an implicit gender blind approach to...compliance remains appropriate...[This] approach...locate[s] gender differences in compliance behaviour in the margins despite ...[their] potential importance...for understanding compliance behaviour from a range of perspectives...This line of inquiry is not merely academic—it has important implications for the wellbeing of children.

1.6 **Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 review the relevant Australian and international research respectively. Chapter 4 describes the Child Support Reform Study’s methodology, measures and data. Chapter 5 through Chapter 9 set out the results.

Specifically, Chapter 5 and 6 answer Question 1: *“What are the characteristics of mothers with a child support liability in Australia and what are the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers?”*

They do this by first comparing liable parents on socio-demographic, family dynamics, and wellbeing variables and identifies the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers. Second, a typology of liable mothers developed for the present study is introduced and detailed. This chapter describes differences between four subgroups of liable mothers with different parenting arrangements.

Chapters 7 and 8 answer Question 2: “*Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?*” They do this by comparing liable parents on a range of child support and compliance variables. This chapter also compares compliance across all liable parents and payees and explores the level of concordant reports on child support paid among ex-couples where both former partners were interviewed. Chapter 8 provides a similar analysis of in-kind contributions.

Chapter 9 answers Question 3: “*What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?*” It does this by examining the odds of non-compliance across a range of variables, and identifies the key factors associated with non-compliance for liable mothers.

Chapter 10 discusses the key findings from each chapter and the policy implications arising from these findings. This chapter also provides insights for service delivery, and future research.

Chapter 2 Literature review of nonresident mothers: Australian studies

This chapter reviews the Australian studies of nonresident mothers and the related child support research. It is in three parts, broadly reflecting the three research questions relevant to the present study: (i) What are the characteristics of liable mothers? (ii) Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers? and (iii) What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers? Details of all the studies are summarised in Appendix A, Table A1. Relevant international literature is discussed in Chapter 3.

The international literature is separated from the Australian literature as differences in law and policies, different social and economic conditions, cultural expectations, and gender specific norms of ‘good’ mothering and fathering, restrict direct transferability. The review concentrates on mothers’ reports. The small literature on lone and resident fathers (see, for example, Pike 2000; Turner, Monk & Mudaly 1998; Wilson, J 1990) are excluded as they do not deal with child support. The research reviewed in this chapter (and Chapter 3 covering the relevant international literature) mainly uses the term ‘nonresident’ to refer to parents with minority-time with at least one child where this term was used in the original research.

2.1 What are the characteristics of liable mothers in Australia?

As mentioned in Chapter 1, while small numbers of mothers lived apart from their children in the previous century in Australia, child support was rarely ordered to be paid and few mothers were liable for child support in the early years of the Child Support Scheme (Child Support Evaluation Advisory Group 1992). Consequently, the research is scant. Where nonresident mothers were examined as a group of interest, the emphasis was on the mother role and child support was not explored. (McMurray (1992) is the exception.)

2.1.1 ***Studies about nonresident mothers***

Early research exploring post-divorce circumstances only briefly mentioned nonresident mothers, that is, mothers with a child living elsewhere and no children in their household (see, for example, Burns 1980) as part of a larger study whose focus was ‘traditional’ post-separation arrangements. This approach concealed those mothers with *both* nonresident and resident children within the lone mother group (see, for example, Hughes 2000; Smyth & Weston 2000), leading to small sample sizes. Such post-separation population studies showed that being a minority-time mother of all their children was not a common arrangement; many so-called ‘nonresident’ mothers had other children in their household, often from the same former relationship. As a later study of minority-time mothers (Buskens 2002) revealed, mothers often did not stay living apart from their children, with a subsequent return to parenting some or all their children a frequent outcome.

Of the two studies that were exclusively focused on nonresident mothers only one mentioned child support. This is not unexpected. Studies of separated parents have generally viewed child support from resident parents’ perspective (mainly mothers) and, less often, nonresident fathers’ perspective (for example, Hawthorne 2005). Few studies collect data on child support from liable mothers and none to date focus primarily on mothers’ reports.³³ Until the early 2000s, where nonresident mothers were beginning to be included in the research on separated parents, their small numbers and consequential lack of statistical power meant responses were either briefly mentioned and then omitted from the analysis (for example, Harrison 1993) or aggregated under a generic nonresident *parent* category.

In one of the two Australian studies of nonresident mothers Buskens (2005: 276), detailed the individual stories of 15 women who ‘chose to leave their husband and children’, focusing on the experience of

³³ Although the Millward, Campo and Fehlberg (2011) paper focused on liable mothers, their findings were mainly drawn from payee fathers’ reports.

mothering while 'not actively mothering full-time'. The mothers had experience of the nonresident role at varying times: 1950s to the early 2000s. Highlighting the high expectations placed on mothers in Australia, Buskens (2002: 36) noted the 'double standard inherent in "parenting"...mothers who left were judged more harshly than fathers'.

Only one pre-2008 research article concentrated on nonresident mothers included questions about child support. In the early 1990s McMurray (1992) interviewed 43 previously married nonresident mothers in Western Australia. The aim of the research was to explore the mother-child relationship from the mother's perspective, and to inform professionals who might encounter nonresident mothers in clinical counselling practices. As was common with the small body of research in this area, all the mothers mentioned social stigma and, for some, the lack of support from their family or anyone who could understand their situation. Limited finances were reported as a factor in custody relinquishment, particularly when the mother had the children living initially with her, and a key difficulty in the mothers' current situation. For the few mothers in the study who were liable to pay child support, payments and the rigidity of the system were areas of particular concern.

One other report warrants discussion under this first research question. It gives some insights into individual expectations of mothering regardless of the parenting arrangements in place after separation, and provides a background to the present study. Funder and Smyth (1996a) explored attitudes to parental responsibilities in an evaluation of 1996 reforms to the *Family Law Act 1975*. This study was a notable (first) exception to research that omitted or aggregated reports from nonresident mothers. Data were collected from the general population, and from a national sample of 495 divorced parents with dependent children who separated after the introduction of the Scheme ($n=40$ nonresident mothers). The respondents were randomly selected from the 1994 electronic White Pages (residential phone numbers database).

A comparison of responses from resident mothers, resident fathers, nonresident mothers and nonresident fathers found gendered differences

in attitudes about parental responsibility, and in actual behaviour. Most divorced parents felt financial responsibilities should be shared (Funder & Smyth 1996a: 306). Although divorced parents accepted the principle of shared responsibilities for care, 'contact' and financial support, mothers felt 'they took *most* of the responsibility for...[core] functions, whether or not they lived with the child or apart' (Funder & Smyth 1996a: x). Differences in behaviour between nonresident mothers and nonresident fathers were 'consistent and very sizable' (Funder & Smyth 1996a: 46).

2.1.2 ***Government-funded research***

One reason that there is little information about liable mothers in Australia is because of the limited research interest in mothers with minority-time. In contrast to the international nonresident mother literature, minority-time mothers as a category of 'mother' appear absent from the work on contemporary mothering in Australia (see, for example, *The Good Mother*, Goodwin & Huppertz 2010). Consequently, information about liable mothers is predominantly found in government-funded child support and family law research. The rest of this literature review mainly refers to this work. Other work coming out of the Child Support Reform Study (CSRS, the data source used in the present study) is not discussed in this literature review. The previously published work using the CSRS (for example, Smyth, Rodgers, Son, Allen & Vnuk 2012; Smyth, Vnuk, Rodgers & Son 2014; Son, Rodgers & Smyth 2014) predominantly relates to separated mothers and separated fathers, or liable fathers and payee mothers. As the literature covered in this chapter purposely does not canvass all the Australian child support work for reasons of space and relevance, the omission of these studies is justified.

Two studies commissioned by the Child Support Agency provide some further detail on the characteristics of liable mothers. The first covers the Scheme caseload from 1997 to 2001 and the second, a subgroup of the caseload—parents with a minimum liability case. Inclusion of liable mothers in these two reports is incidental to the main aim of the work. As will be discussed further in the next section on 'are liable mothers

compliant', this work continues the previous analytic approach of omitting analyses of liable mothers' reports or aggregating them with those of liable fathers.

Silvey and Birrell (2004) used the Child Support Agency administrative data to explore the financial circumstances of a cohort of registrants who separated in 1997 and remained in the caseload until at least 2001. The researchers aimed to establish how nonresident parents' income changed after separation and to test anecdotal evidence that payers 'seek to evade...obligations by reducing their engagement in the labour market' (Silvey & Birrell 2004: 45); that is, the so-called 'stuff-it' option.

Administrative data are useful for this type of analysis as they include detailed income information from the Australian Taxation Office. Analysis focused on male payers and female payees, including parents with no current liability. Mothers in the 1997 cohort, whether expected to pay or receive child support, generally had low incomes both at separation and in 2001. Median income of the 5,023 female payers was around \$9,500. Median liability of female payers was \$0 at registration and \$260 in 2001 reflecting the new minimum assessment. Silvey and Birrell concluded that the income profile of female payers closely matched both male and female payees, suggesting reliance on government income support, such as parenting payments or unemployment benefits.

The other CSA study was an evaluation of the 1999 introduction of a minimum assessment by Wolffs and Shallcross (2000). This involved 1,500 parents liable to pay the minimum amount drawn from a random sample of 8,000 payers from the Agency caseload (Child Support Agency 2001). Wolffs and Shallcross (2000: 28) noted that 15% of payer respondents were female. This was almost double their representation in the caseload but matched the 14% of minimum assessments with a liable mother. Their circumstances were quite complex: 13% of mothers had more than one case, compared with 4% in the total caseload. Forty per cent of mothers had repartnered, indicating some were supported by a new partner and had little income of their own.

These two early studies indicate that many liable mothers have low incomes and low liabilities and that the introduction of the minimum liability may have particularly affected low-income minority-time mothers who previously had no liability to pay because their income was below the self-support amount. The policy had been promoted as a means to reinforce responsibility for disengaged fathers and this outcome was not foreshadowed (or likely foreseen) by those promoting this policy change (Vnuk 2000).

The remainder of this chapter reviews findings on child support from a group of large, government-commissioned research projects undertaken by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). Their main purpose was to evaluate the 2006 and 2012 reforms to the family law and system. Specifically, the first set (the Longitudinal Study of Separated Families (LSSF)) comprises three waves of data from 10,000 parents who separated after the 2006 family law reforms (Kaspiew et al. 2009; Qu & Weston 2010; Qu et al. 2014). The second (the Survey of Recently Separated Parents (SRSP) 2012 and 2014) involves two cohorts of parents, 6,119 who separated in 2011 and 6,079 in 2013, that is before and after the 2012 family violence and child safety reforms (De Maio et al. 2013; Kaspiew, Carson, Dunstan et al. 2015). The 2012 reforms had the objective of ‘placing greater emphasis on protecting children from harm in making post-separation parenting arrangements...[This includes] a wider definition of family violence [and] greater emphasis on the principle of protecting children [and] prioritising [this] over the meaningful involvement principle’ (De Maio et al. 2013: 2).

This AIFS work shares common features: (i) the sampling frame was the Child Support Agency active caseload for cases registered in the year before the survey³⁴ (ii) the average time since separation was 17–18 months for the survey or first wave; (iii) questions about one (focus) child of the relationship, who was on average preschool age in 2008³⁵ and

³⁴ Wave 3 involved 5,755 parents from Wave 1 and a ‘top up’ group of 3,372 selected using the same sample extraction, that is, separated July 2006 to December 2007 and registered a case between January and May 2008.

³⁵ The focus child was the first listed for the case in the administrative database: mainly the youngest child, with 58% under 3 years old (Qu & Weston 2010: 4). The inclusion

primary school age by Wave 3 (LSSF) or aged seven (SRSP); and (iv) a standard set of child support questions. The sample unit was the *case* to maximise the number of former couples where both parents were interviewed. The sample was stratified by liable parents' gender, with sampling rates designed to achieve the highest probability of selecting cases with a liable mother.

These studies are discussed as a group as findings build on previous waves and/or studies. One other study, a longitudinal qualitative research project (Fehlberg, Millward & Campo 2010), is reviewed alongside this work as it similarly was an evaluation of the 2006 family law reform and covered a comparable time period. This post-2008 work can be seen as 'second generation' studies (Smyth 2009: 52).³⁶

Two of these studies provide some descriptive analysis of relevance to this research question. The first, as part of profiling parenting-time arrangements of parents who separated after the 2006 family law reforms, included profiling of mothers in cases where the focus child spent most of the time with their father (Kaspiew et al. 2009); 5% of families in the LSSF Wave 1. This group included split-residence mothers where the focus child was with the father. Details for mothers with no time were based on fathers' reports. The mothers were more likely to (i) have an older adolescent; (ii) be in full-time employment; (iii) be living with a current partner; and (iv) be less involved with their child prior to separation. Many of these mothers had a resident child. Notably, not all mothers in this group were liable parents.

This first AIFS report highlighted the challenge in identifying liable mothers; a difficulty common to work that use the CSA administrative data as a sample frame. This is indicative of the issue mentioned in Section 1.2.4, that is, the Agency's inclusion of parents with no current

of parents who had never lived together contributed to the younger age of the focus child (De Maio et al. 2013: 11). Mean age of the focus child in the SRSP 2012 and 2014 was seven years; older than in the LSSF as parents who never lived together were omitted from the SRSP sample (De Maio et al. 2013).

³⁶ The Child Support Reform Study (CSRS) used for the present study is the other main second-generation work.

liability as ‘payers’. Of the 683 mothers identified in CSA records as payers, 195 mothers actually reported that they were liable at Wave 1 (Kaspiew et al. 2009 Appendix B Table 9). Four percent of mothers in the LSSF were supposed to pay child support and 16% reported neither paying nor receiving child support, reflecting cases with no current liability. Further analysis of the LSSF showed few mothers with equal or majority-time (here, more than 65% time) were required to pay and although higher proportions of mothers had a liability as their percentage of overnights reduced, it did not exceed 50% for any of the parenting arrangements reported (Weston 2010). In comparison, 87–91% of fathers reported they were liable to pay child support when they had less than 35% time with the focus child (Kaspiew et al. 2009: 193).

While the AIFS work did not describe liable mothers as a group in any detail, another family law evaluation did. Liable mothers with more than minority-time were included in the mothers profiled in the second relevant study. In their 2011 paper, Millward, Campo and Fehlberg explored a small group of liable-mother cases as part of their larger longitudinal qualitative study involving 60 separated parents and interaction of time, property settlement and child support after the 2006 family law reforms (see Fehlberg 2008; Fehlberg, Millward & Campo 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Fehlberg et al. 2013). Parents were recruited through newspaper and online advertisements or via mediation/family court services in Victoria. The recruitment strategy targeted separated parents with primary school aged children and oversampled for shared-time. Their paper on liable mothers used information from the first interview in 2009, a year after the child support reforms.

Of the 11 cases where the mother was liable to pay, four interviews were with the mother. Three of these mothers had ‘substantially shared’ arrangements (43–70% time) and one had equal-time. In all other cases including all those where the father had primary (at least 90%) time, the father was the parent interviewed. Four fathers had primary time, one had majority (57%) time and two had equal-time. This research

highlights the wider range of mothers who are liable. The impact of this on child support arrangements is discussed later in this chapter.

2.2 Compliance rates of liable mothers

This section covers the small amount of literature relevant to the second research question: are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers? Returning to the two CSA commissioned studies mentioned above, some limited information can be gleaned. Wolffs and Shallcross (2000: 29) in their evaluation of the minimum liability found mothers were less likely than fathers to report they ‘always paid on time’ (47% compared with 51%) and more likely to report they ‘never paid’ (26% compared with 21%). The researchers did not say if any statistical tests were applied to these results so it is unclear if these differences were significant. Findings of this study relate to liable parents with the lowest incomes, and may not be an indication of compliance in the overall caseload.

In the other CSA study, Silvey and Birrell (2004) noted that the mean liability of mothers in 2001 was \$803 and their mean debt was \$225. Their median liability was \$260 (that is, the minimum liability under the Assessment Act). In contrast, fathers had a liability of \$3,262 and a debt of \$936. Their median liability was \$1,695 (Silvey & Birrell 2004: 47). Notably, mothers had a lower mean debt than fathers, partly because of lower liabilities, often the minimum.

One other study from the mid-2000s is relevant to refer to when reviewing the literature for this research question. Natalier, Walter, Wulff, Reynolds and Hewitt (2008), as part of their work that explored child support and housing outcomes, briefly mentioned mothers who paid child support. Using data from Wave 4 of the Housing and Family Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey collected in 2004–05 and the category of ‘parents apart’ to be inclusive of ‘all parents...of dependent children who do not, or no longer, reside in the same household as the other parent of their child’ (Natalier et al. 2008: 6), the researchers found that 39% of mothers with a nonresident child reported paying child support. This was significantly lower than the 78% of fathers who paid

something (Natalier et al. 2008: 33). Further discussion of child support was not disaggregated by gender.

This research is an example of where findings about mothers and their payment of child support can be misinterpreted by the general reader. Response categories in HILDA Wave 4 did not distinguish between situations where no child support was *meant* to be paid (that is, where there was no arrangement for payment in place or no current liability) and not paying an expected amount in full (that is, actual non-compliance). Thus, this research shows significantly lower rate of *payment* by mothers than fathers but no substantial information about their compliance. Moreover, the number of nonresident mothers in Wave 4 was small ($n=36$) as the researchers excluded those with both resident and nonresident children ($n=54$). The reduced pool of potential liable mothers may be important as another HILDA analysis indicated almost half of mothers with a nonresident child had a resident child from the previous relationship (Parkinson & Smyth 2003: 4).

2.2.1 *Child support compliance rates for recently separated parents: family law evaluations*

The main source of compliance information about liable mothers comes from the three waves of the LSSF. Analysis of data from liable mothers and payee fathers in the first two waves of the LSSF were restricted to rates of compliance. Information was available for 195 liable mothers at Wave 1: 59% reported paying in full and on time compared with 74% of liable fathers. In contrast, just half of payee fathers reported receiving child support in full and on time, with 21% receiving payments neither in full nor on time (Weston 2010). Further analysis was limited to liable fathers and payee mothers.

At Wave 2, analysis of parents who participated in both waves (Qu & Weston 2010: 124) found no change in liable mothers' compliance at the aggregate level (56% compared with 55%), although more mothers reported paying neither in full nor on time than in 2008 (26% compared with 19%). (The number of liable mothers was not stated, but probably less than 200 based on other questions in the section on child support).

Payee fathers reported lower compliance than liable mothers at 34%; lower than at Wave 1 (Qu & Weston 2010: 125).

At Wave 3, of the 211 liable mothers, 60% reported being compliant, again lower than liable fathers (73%) but higher than previous waves. A third of payee fathers reported full compliance, the same as Wave 2 (Qu et al. 2014). Liable mothers had higher rates of paying neither in full nor on time than liable fathers at all waves (17–26% compared with 3–6%) (Qu et al. 2014:124). No tests of significance comparing liable parent responses were noted at any wave.

Comparing reports across LSSF waves, the impact of churn (that is, movement out of the liable parent group) warrants consideration: 37% of mothers liable in 2008 were no longer liable one year later compared with one-in-ten liable fathers (Qu & Weston 2010: 119). Analysis of the continuing sample at Wave 3 revealed that half of mothers liable at Wave 1 were payees or had no current liability in 2012 (Qu et al. 2014). Consequently, compliance for liable mothers and payee fathers in particular represented a different group of parents at each wave. Further, any impact of time since separation on compliance was difficult to identify as this did not necessarily equate with time liable for around half of liable mothers at Wave 3.

Compliance information was more limited in the SRSP 2012 (De Maio et al. 2013) and SRSP 2014 (Kaspiew et al. 2015) than in the LSSF Wave 3. Reports from liable parents are restricted to fullness as a programming error meant that only payees were asked about timeliness. Liable mothers in the 2012 cohort ($n=251$) reported significantly lower rates of full payment than liable fathers (87% compared with 95%). In contrast, liable mothers in the 2014 cohort (5% of mothers) had similar rates of full payment to liable fathers (94% and 95%) and were significantly more likely to pay in full than liable mothers in 2012. Patterns of compliance for payees confirmed results from the three waves of the LSSF showing lower reports of compliance by payee fathers than payee mothers (40% compared with 49% in 2012 and in 2014) and were significantly more likely to report that the payment was neither in full nor on time than

payee mothers (De Maio et al. 2013: 111; Kaspiew, Carson, Dunstan et al. 2015: 175).

2.2.2 *Qualitative reports on compliance*

Unlike the AIFS studies based on survey data, Millward, Campo and Fehlberg's (2011) qualitative study noted that the liable mothers did not have lower compliance than liable fathers. Seven of the 11 mothers paid periodic child support, direct costs or both. Most mothers had Private Collect and preferred to pay directly for their children's clothing, medical or school costs because they 'were closely focused on children's daily life and needs and...generally organised children's weekly activities... regardless of the type of parenting arrangements in place' (Millward, Campo & Fehlberg 2011: 70), or felt that the father was financially irresponsible. The researchers noted that where the mother paid directly for their children's expenses, it appeared that they paid more than required by the formula.

2.3 *Reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers*

This section reviews the very limited literature on reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers. The AIFS studies described above did not explore reasons for non-compliance in liable mother cases. However, perception of fairness; attitudes on a range of statements reflecting views that could affect compliance; and experiences of violence/abuse were reported by gender of the liable parent in some of the AIFS reports and are discussed later in this section for background. Only two studies thus far have reported any possible reasons for non-compliance. One study was restricted to liable parents with the lowest incomes in the CSA caseload; the other uses data from four in-depth interviews with parents in cases with a liable mother.

In Wolffs and Shallcross's (2000: 29) evaluation of the minimum liability, affordability was the reason given for non-payment by 43% of mothers. Other reasons for non-compliance were not detailed. As payment was required from parents whose sole income was FTB or a Disability Support Pension, this finding was unsurprising.

Millward, Campo and Fehlberg (2011) described four cases where the liable mother was not paying in full. In three of the four cases the father was the parent interviewed and he agreed to the non-payment because of shared-time or other reasons specific to that case. The one mother who conceded that she was not paying in full was in dispute with the Child Support Program about the assessment and was angry that the father had not paid her when he was the liable parent (Millward, Campo & Fehlberg 2011). It would appear from this work that some ‘non-compliance’ reflected agreed arrangements not to pay in full. In another paper from this study, the authors suggested that coercion was a reason for accepting less child support for payee mothers but was not reported by any payee fathers (Fehlberg, Millward & Campo 2010).

The next part of this section discusses some issues that could potentially be relevant to non-compliance and is discussed mainly for the purposes of background to the present study.

At Wave 3 of the LSSF, the researchers reported compliance rates based on whether the respondent had or had not experienced violence or abuse from their former partner in the previous 12 months. These were measured based on reports of being physically hurt or experiencing emotional abuse (for example, threats, belittling or circulating derogatory comments about you) (Qu et al. 2014: 21). Data were collected at all three waves but not previously reported. Compliance was significantly lower at Wave 2 for liable mothers who experienced violence/abuse but not significantly different in other waves (Qu et al. 2014).³⁷ Compliance did not differ for liable fathers. However, based on the figures provided with this table in the report, most liable mothers experienced violence/abuse at Wave 1 and 2 (77% and 60%) and half at Wave 3. Whether the lower rate of compliance was *because* of the violence/abuse was not investigated further. Liable mothers who experienced violence/abuse may differ from those that did not in other ways that

³⁷ Compliance was significantly lower in Waves 1 and 3 for payee fathers who experienced violence/abuse (Qu et al. 2014). As with liable mothers, fathers reported high rates of experiencing violence and abuse: 66% at Wave 1, 52% at Wave 2 and 42% at Wave 3.

were not tested or another factor could be associated with both non-compliance and violence/abuse.

Data on physical hurt and emotional abuse were also collected in the SRSP 2012 and 2014 (using the same categories as the LSSF) but the section on child support in the two SRSP reports only contained data from payees.³⁸ Further, information from the 2014 cohort of payees was presented by experience of physical abuse, emotional abuse or neither, not disaggregated by payee gender.

At Wave 3 of the LSSF, parents were asked several one-off questions about whether they agreed with a set of attitudinal statements that previous research (that is research with payee mothers and/or liable fathers) suggest are potential reasons for non-compliance.³⁹ Responses to these statements are informative for the present study as they have not been asked of liable mothers before. While there was a high rate of agreement by both liable mothers and liable fathers that the amount was affordable, the level of agreement differed for the other statements.

Fathers more often agreed that the amount was ‘more than the child needs’ and that they resented paying because of ‘no say in spending’ and because of the amount of time they had with their children, than liable mothers (Qu et al. 2014). The high level of agreement by fathers to the latter statements is not unexpected (see for example, Hawthorne & Linings 2008; Natalier & Hewitt 2010). As reasons for non-compliance were not explored in this report, it is uncertain what impact or association, if any, liable mothers’ less strong support for these views had on actual compliance behaviour.

It is useful under this broad discussion of non-compliance to examine findings from the LSSF and the SRSP about differing perceptions of fairness of the amount of child support payable by liable parents. These

³⁸ Payee fathers in the SRSP 2012 who reported physical violence or emotional abuse reported lower compliance: 32–34% compared with 57% for payee fathers with no experience of violence or abuse (De Maio et al. 2013: 113). Again, the majority (64%) reported experiencing physical hurt or emotional abuse, predominantly the latter.

³⁹ The Department of Human Services (DHS) paid for the attitudinal questions to be asked at Wave 3. (The Attorney-General’s Department funded the survey overall.) The reasons for possible non-compliance, and how these were subsequently worded in the survey, were provided by DHS.

are reported by gender and, in the SRSP, by gender and parenting arrangement. Liable mothers were the least likely of the four groups (liable mothers, liable fathers, payee mothers and payee fathers) to report that the amount was fair across all five AIFS reports: 27–36% of liable mother rating child support as very unfair compared with 14–21% of liable fathers (De Maio et al. 2013; Kaspiw et al. 2009; Kaspiw, Carson, Dunstan et al. 2015 ; Qu & Weston 2010; Qu et al. 2014).

When fairness was reported by parenting-time across the four groups for the two most recent cohorts of separated parents, differing perceptions of liable parents with shared time was the most striking finding. Among parents who registered a case in 2011, 65% of shared-time liable mothers described the amount of child support as ‘somewhat’ or ‘very unfair’ compared with 45% of shared-time liable fathers (De Maio et al. 2013: 114). Rates were even higher among the cohort who separated in 2013. Kaspiw, Carson, Dunstan and others (2015: 179) found that 73% of shared-time liable mothers described the amount as ‘somewhat’ or ‘very unfair’ compared with 48% of shared-time liable fathers. It is possible that fairness may play some part in liable mothers’ non-compliance but this was not tested.

2.4 Key points from the Australian literature

The Australian research on liable mothers is small, patchy, and underdeveloped. The pre-2008 evidence relies on reports from a small number of self-selected nonresident mothers; 225 liable mothers with a minimum assessment; and analysis of the 1997–2001 Scheme caseload including mothers classified as ‘payers’ with no current liability. These studies provide only limited data to inform the present study. They suggest that separated mothers who live apart from one or more of their children generally remain connected to their children who lived elsewhere and that many so-called ‘nonresident’ mothers had a shared-time or a resident child. Further, based on older caseload data, female payers in general appear to have low incomes and low liabilities.

The studies highlight that mothers with a nonresident child appear less likely to pay child support than fathers but, as Vnuk (2010) has previously pointed out, non-payment due to no liability is difficult to disentangle from non-compliance. This presents a challenge in identifying and describing liable mothers. Although there is likely to be a significant overlap between minority-time (nonresident) mothers and liable mothers (the focus of the present study), these two groups are not the same. First, some liable mothers may have more than minority-time with one or more former relationship children. Second, some minority-time mothers may not be liable mothers because they do not have a CSA case, or where labelled as ‘payers’ in the CSA administrative caseload data, may have no current liability.

The post-2008 data from representative ‘second generation’ studies (Smyth 2009: 52) such as the LSSF and SRSP, show compliance rates but provide no detailed description of liable mothers, or how they might differ from liable fathers. Thus, the first research gap to address is to produce a comprehensive profile of liable mothers.

The post-2008 data, provide a consistent story about compliance rates of cohorts of recently separated parents mainly with young (preschool or early primary school age) children⁴⁰ using reports from liable parents and payees. Liable mothers consistently report lower compliance than liable fathers (but whether significantly lower was not stated) and appear to view child support as less fair for them but reasons for this were not explored. The one longitudinal qualitative study provides a broader view of financial responsibility across a range of post-separation parenting arrangements, although mainly from payee fathers’ perspectives.

Compliance rates are the area of previous work that has received the most research attention, reflecting the aim of including the range of separated families in the family law evaluation post-2008. Nonetheless, there is still a gap in understanding compliance for liable parents in the

⁴⁰ In 2009–10, 73% of children with a mother living elsewhere were over nine years of age (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

broader caseload and to understand how liable mothers' non-compliance might differ from liable fathers' non-compliance. These gaps include payment of none of the expected amount; reasons for non-compliance within the liable mother group (for example, by parenting-time, by income); and concordance of reports of payment from both former partners using dyadic data.

The research to date has been descriptive and atheoretical. The only research that utilised a theoretical framework (Buskens 2005) did not cover child support. While gender and the different role expectations for mothers and fathers were raised in several studies, the focus was on differences between payee mothers and liable fathers.

The Australian research does not appear to be informed by the international work on minority-time and/or liable mothers. Further, liable mothers are absent from shared-time studies that discuss child support (see, for example, Cashmore et al. 2010; Lacroix 2006; Rhoades, Graycar & Harrison 2000) with the exception of Fehlberg et al. (2013), highlighting a gap in the evidence base.

The next chapter details findings from the international research, and explores their relevance for liable mothers in the Australian child support system.

Chapter 3 Literature review: international studies

This chapter reviews the relevant international nonresident mother and child support research. The structure of this chapter follows that of Chapter 2 that is, broadly reflecting the three research questions relevant to the present study: (i) What are the characteristics of liable mothers? (ii) Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers? and (iii) What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?

The nonresident/liable mother literature is followed by three studies comparing nonresident parents' child support payment by gender using reports from resident parents or payees. These are included as they test some relevant theoretical approaches. The final section discusses the applicability and limitations of the existing international literature and identifies gaps to be addressed by the present study. As in Chapter 2, the focus is on mothers' reports and mainly uses the term 'nonresident' to refer to parents with minority-time with at least one child where this term was used in the original research. Details of all the nonresident mother and related child support studies are summarised in Appendix A, Table A2.

Most of the international literature covered in this chapter is from the US with some work from Norway. However, the relevant work does not necessarily reflect the interest in child support research in general, for example, Canada, UK and New Zealand are under-represented in this review. In the case of the latter two countries this is because of a methodological approach to aggregate child support data from mothers and fathers into one group of nonresident/liable parents.

3.1 What are the characteristics of liable mothers?

This section reviews the international literature relevant to the first research question, what are the characteristics of liable mothers. Most of the research on nonresident mothers, particularly the pre-2000s work, does not explore child support, or does so by brief reference incidental to the main theme of exploring the 'nonresident' mother role. This section begins with an overview of this nonresident mother work to provide

context for this research question and to inform the theoretical framework of gendered expectations of the mother role.

Early work focused on the process of leaving children ('how could she?'), and the mother-child relationship exploring how and why women lived apart from their children and their adjustment. The main themes were from psychology and social work, often with a therapeutic approach. In-depth interviews about personal experiences prevailed. Some researchers suggested that the subject of 'nonresident' mothers lends itself to a qualitative rather than quantitative approach 'given the role ambiguity and "outsider" status' (Arditti 1995: 299). Early US and Canadian work (for example, Fischer 1983; Isenhardt 1979; Larsen 1987; Polson 1977; Todres 1978) were convenience samples, often small-scale, utilising language of 'deviancy', 'moral courage', 'childless mother', 'run-away wives', and 'natural mothers who terminate the primary parent role'.

This was followed by 1980s and early 1990s work which comprised both academic dissertations and in popular book format (Edwards, H 1989; Franks 1990; Glubka 1983; Herrerias 1984, 1995; Koehler 1982; Meyers & Lakin 1983; Paskowicz 1982). Participants were mainly from the US but also Canada and the UK, recruited through newspaper and magazine ads, nonresident mother support groups or via personal contact. Some lacked a theoretical framework although others were informed by feminist theory or a symbolic interaction theoretical framework (Chesler 1986; Herrerias 1984). Again, the titles emphasised the atypical role.⁴¹ Most attempted to present nonresident mothers in a sympathetic light, featuring the authors' personal experiences as nonresident mothers, while the UK study by Franks was more judgemental addressing the stigma and intense disapproval expressed towards these 'unnatural women'. Chesler (1986) writing more broadly on custody disputes highlighted that *any* woman who acted outside the expected role of a

⁴¹ For example, Paskowicz *Absentee Mothers*; Meyers and Lakin *Who Will Take the Children?*; Edwards *How Could You? Mothers without custody of their children*; and Franks *Mummy Doesn't Live Here Anymore*.

‘good’ mother, by for example working outside the home, could risk losing her children if the father contested this in court.

Some scholars criticise this group of work as ‘advocacy scholarship’ (Depner 1993: 52), as ‘[many] wrote about personally being noncustodial mothers...setting themselves up as the individual frames of reference in their studies’ (Herrerias 1984: 62). Others suggest ‘sharing common experiences and engaging with participants person to person creates a “safe” environment, helping to produce a setting where participants feel comfortable discussing their personal experiences’ (Bemiller 2005: 49).

Payment of child support *by* the mother was rarely covered in this early research because an order for a mother to pay was still an unusual situation. As Franks (1990: 198) explained:

Even the paying of maintenance, which can be perceived as a validation of parenthood, can be felt as punishment if it is imposed in a fashion suggesting the mother as miscreant. Women who leave and pay through choice are in some ways in a better position psychologically.

Nonetheless, the lack of payment of child support by fathers was a dominant theme. For example, comparing 12 mothers who ‘voluntarily gave up custody’ mostly for economic reasons with a group of nonresident fathers, Chesler (1986: 202) found

[h]igher earning fathers expressed no guilt about paying too little or no child support; the lower earning mothers all said they “wished” they could afford to send their children more or some money.

3.1.1 ***US nonresident mother studies including child support***

This section reviews several substantial studies of nonresident mothers (one that included shared-time arrangements) where child support was one issue addressed. This is followed by five qualitative studies that focus on some key issues in depth. (Other work with nonresident mothers is deliberately omitted from this review or discussed in less detail.) The first major work was by Greif (1986; Greif & Pabst 1988). In 1983, Greif surveyed 517 nonresident mothers from US and Canada, drawn from two self-help groups: Parents without Partners and Mothers without Custody. Additional in-depth interviews were conducted with survey respondents and other nonresident mothers between 1983 and 1987. Greif (1986: 87)

noted the difficulty of locating a representative sample and the absence of data on nonresident mothers, and suggested his study could be used as a baseline.

Greif utilised a role theory framework, highlighting differing expectations of payment in the mid-1980s. Mothers expressed ambivalence, ambiguity and anger about child support and resented having to pay, particularly when they had a low income or earned less than the father. Again, lack of money in general, or because of fathers' non-payment of child support, explained why children lived with their father. Greif and Pabst (1988: 181) identified a role conflict with 'few models to follow... [Mothers] are either held to no standard or to the same standard that is used for fathers'.

Greif and Pabst (1988) did not ask mothers whether payment was court ordered or whether the full amount was paid. However, the researchers noted that mothers who paid (i) earned higher incomes; (ii) were less likely to have a child of the relationship living with them; and (iii) described themselves as more involved with their nonresident children (Greif & Pabst 1988: 143)

In another influential piece of work, Maccoby, Mnookin, Depner and Peters (1992) covered a range of post-separation parenting arrangements of 1,100 Californian families who filed for divorce in 1984-85 and who were followed for three years. At Time 1, 32% of children were either in shared-time, mainly with the father or split between the parents (Maccoby et al. 1992: 74). Children were significantly more likely to live mainly with their father if the mother had low involvement in parenting pre-separation; the father had concerns about the child's wellbeing; and the mother did not mistrust the father's childrearing skills. Other factors included choice by an older child and the father exerting power over the mother (Maccoby et al. 1992: 88).

Nonresident mothers were less likely to be ordered to pay child support than nonresident fathers (36% compared with 89-96%), mainly because of their lower income. When parents had shared-time, 67% of cases had

a child support order; 1% where the mother was liable (Maccoby et al. 1992: 116–119). Analysis of compliance was restricted to liable fathers.

Five qualitative studies involving nonresident mothers solely or in comparison with other separated parents (Babcock 1995; Heikes 1993; Bemiller 2005; Kartch 2013; Cozzolino 2014) provide some insight into views on how the mother role is experienced and on financial responsibilities including child support. Babcock (1995, 1998) interviewed 50 nonresident mothers with the aim of understanding the individualised meaning of nonresident motherhood. Mothers' role identity was explored via a feminist framework. To address problems of non-representative samples Babcock (1995: 50) adopted a comprehensive recruitment process: public court records of parents who divorced in 1989–94 in Idaho, telephone directory searches, advertising and, to increase the diversity of her self-selected sample, recruited 10 mothers through the Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International.

As in earlier studies, Babcock (1995) found the lack of economic resources was a significant factor in father custody but unlike previously, 50–70% of mothers were liable (depending on the subgroup involved). Babcock (1995: 61) suggested this reflected the introduction of federal child support guidelines and a 'more gender-neutral stance by the courts'.

Mother identity remained salient for all but one of the respondents. They consistently defined themselves as mothers, not *nonresident* mothers. Ideas of motherhood were redefined to deal with 'identity dissonance' which Babcock (1995: 92) described as 'the discomfort experienced by respondents when their self-perceptions as mothers do not match their perception of the societal (identity) standard of motherhood'. Redesign of their parenting style and the mother–child relationship to be more 'buddy-like' (Babcock 1998: 147) was one example given.

Comparisons with 20 nonresident fathers highlighted that fathers were more likely to be ordered to pay child support while mothers had more frequent in-person contact. While the fathers regarded paying child

support as part of their fathering identity, none of the mothers saw it as part of ‘nonresidential mothering’ (Babcock 1995: 106).

Taking a similar theme and theoretical approach (here a synthesis of symbolic interaction and feminism), Heikes (1993) examined role-making and gender negotiation for 20 single custodial fathers and seven nonresident mothers in Texas. Confirming Babcock’s findings, the ‘noncustodial’ aspect of motherhood did not appear to be part of mother identity. Heikes (1993: 105) suggested that by divorcing and choosing to be noncustodial mothers they were ‘doubly deviant’ and must necessarily portray their decision to relinquish custody as showing they were ‘good mothers’. Only two mothers paid child support regularly, one was still entitled to payment from her ex-husband under a previous court order and the remaining four had no order in place (Heikes 1993: 50).

A decade later, Bemiller (2005) interviewed 16 nonresident mothers in Ohio located via flyers at university, social support agencies, coffee shops, laundromats and therapeutic services, and snowballing. Consistent with early approaches, such as Babcock’s, Bemiller (2005: 5) used a feminist framework as ‘this allows for the active participation of noncustodial mothers in defining and understanding their subjective experiences’. Most mothers ‘attempted to participate in intensive mothering strategies’ (Bemiller 2005: 157). Mothers who were unable to live up to dominant expectations of motherhood (that is, providing daily care by living with their child, meeting their child’s needs, buying things and paying for extra-curricular activities) reported a great deal of guilt and shame, which affected how they viewed themselves as mothers. Bemiller (2005: 133) pointed out that only five mothers resisted this dominant ideology of mothering. However, although 10 mothers were ordered to pay child support, few did. (Reasons for this are discussed further in Section 3.3.) All the mothers recounted experiences of violence or abuse (Bemiller 2008). A similar, high rate of domestic violence (75%) was noted in another US study (Herrerias 2008).

More recently, Kartch (2013) used a symbolic interaction framework to explore the parental role focusing on parent–child communication.

Twenty nonresident mothers and 20 nonresident fathers recruited via Facebook, Craigslist and the university, completed in-depth interviews. Of the eight major parental roles, the provider role was the fourth identified by parents, with both mothers and fathers seeing this as ‘part of their continuing responsibility towards their nonresidential children’ (Kartch 2013: 44). Mothers mentioned this role as often as fathers. A third of parents identified ‘providing’ as a method of enacting parenting, although further analysis suggested that providing for children included spending time and other financial contributions rather than solely child support. In noting that more than half of parents reported similar roles for mothers and fathers, Kartch (2013: 85) pointed to ‘a shift in the way society understands parenting’. Nonetheless, a substantial minority of the mothers still saw their role as a nurturer and the role of a father as provider. The shift in parental roles found by Kartch may be due to the predominantly college-level education of the participants, suggesting a more egalitarian attitude to parenting.

Another qualitative study focusing on parental roles provides a different perspective to that raised in Kartch’s work. Cozzolino (2014) interviewed eight nonresident parents ($n=2$ mothers), seven resident mothers and six adult children of divorced/separated parents to explore how mothers and fathers determined the appropriate use of child support monies. The views of the two nonresident mothers reflected their prior resident mother role as well as their current role and the way that the child support system operated in the US for poor people. In their nonresident role they emphasised the unaffordability of payments and that ‘love, time and caring’ mattered more than money to children. (Cozzolino 2014: 46).

The literature discussed above mainly focused on the mother role with some discussion of child support in the later work. As previously mentioned, this research was mainly qualitative. Another strand of work relevant to this research question involves large representative datasets used to identify similarities and differences between nonresident mothers and fathers. Although data from resident parents were more often used in the research than nonresident parents, particularly where child

support payment was the focus (see Section 3.4 where three analyses using a gender role theoretical approach are described), a few did use nonresident mothers' reports. Government-funded research exploring the characteristics and compliance of liable parents (predominantly minority-time parents) undertaken to address the limited socio-demographic information on nonresident fathers and their ability to pay child support is covered in this subsection. This work reflects the formula-based child support legislation and an increased government investment in research to improve collection and enforcement (see, for example in the US the work from the Institute for Poverty Research and The Urban Institute, and in the UK the Department for Work and Pensions), and thus liable mothers were included. Although UK and New Zealand undertook research into child support compliance (see, for example, Atkinson & McKay 2005; Colmar Brunton 2009; Wikeley et al. 2001), the US work was the sole source of data where liable mothers were discussed as a separate group.

Sousa and Sorensen (2006) used data from the 2002 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) to describe nonresident mothers in the general population. The NSAF was representative of 10 million nonresident parents: 2.2 million mothers. Nonresident mothers had similar age, education, and marital status as nonresident fathers but mothers had lower incomes, were less likely to be in paid employment, and were almost twice as likely to have a resident child. The researchers noted that differences could explain why resident fathers were less likely to have a child support award: 37% compared with 54% of resident mothers (Sousa & Sorensen 2006: 1).

Further information was provided in a study funded by the Californian Department of Social Services investigating the characteristics and behaviours of nonresident parents ($n=44$ mothers) with child support arrears due for a child on welfare in one Los Angeles county (Becerra & Ong 2001). This analysis used survey responses from nonresident and resident parents and administrative data. However, the report although comprehensive, was descriptive and thus similarities and difference were

based on percentages and means with no statistical testing of the data for significant findings. Becerra and Ong (2001: 95) reported that apart from differences in age and ethnicity, nonresident mothers and fathers were more similar than different. The common characteristics included the lack of marketable skills and other barriers to employment such as mental and physical health problems; low education; and criminal records. Mothers and fathers had similar rates of paid employment although mothers' mean household earnings were lower and they reported poorer health. Many of the mothers had lost, or never had, custody because of drug or alcohol abuse. Few were previously married, meaning children often lived with relatives or in foster care rather than with their father. Almost three-quarters of mothers stated that child support payments were more than they could afford, compared with around half of fathers, and mothers were twice as likely as fathers to say that the ordered amount was unreasonable (Becerra & Ong 2001: 94).

Some early research on nonresident mothers and child support focused on systemic and policy issues. This work mainly reviewed court records of divorces and focused on whether amounts of child support ordered were fair because of mothers' average lower incomes (Arditti & Madden-Derdich 1993; Christensen, Dahl & Rettig 1990). Stirling and Aldrich (2012), in an up-dating of this earlier work, investigated whether mothers were ordered to pay a lower percentage of income than fathers. They reviewed child support orders made at divorce in Washington State in 2000–01 and found that, even when controlling for income, mothers were required to pay less of their income for child support than fathers (10% compared with 21%). As was found in the Australian caseload research (Silvey & Birrell (2004), nonresident mothers had similar economic circumstances to resident mothers. Stirling and Aldrich found that nonresident mothers were worse-off post-separation than nonresident fathers and both resident fathers and resident mothers except where the nonresident mother and resident father were both on very low incomes.

In a similar vein are cohort studies examining trends in shared versus sole-time orders (for example, Brown & Cook 2011; Brown, Joung &

Berger 2006; Cook, ST & Brown 2006; Krecker et al. 2003). This work informs the present study in two areas: (i) the frequency of mothers being liable at different levels of parenting time akin to the analysis undertaken by Kaspiw et al. (2009) in Section 2.2.1 and (ii) stability of arrangements. Subgroups of equal-time arrangements and those where the mother or father had more time were possible because 20–40% of parents in Wisconsin post-2000 had shared-time (Brown, Joung & Berger 2006: 9).

Brown, Joung and Berger (2006) followed two cohorts of divorce cases (pre- and post-2000) with equal-time, unequal shared-time and majority-time selected from the Wisconsin Court Record Data over three years to explore the interaction between parenting time and child support and whether child support orders were being changed to reflect *actual* parenting arrangements. The researchers found a substantial proportion of children in equal-shared and unequal-mother-more group moved to more time with their father. These changes may have created a liability for the mother but the child support orders were unchanged (Brown, Joung & Berger 2006: 24). In a third of cases in the post-2000 cohort where shared-time changed, it was to majority-time with the father based on mothers' responses, pointing towards a 'paternal drift' rather than solely the maternal drift observed in earlier studies (Brown, Joung & Berger 2006: 33).

As with the earlier work by Maccoby and colleagues, Brown, Joung and Berger found lower rates of child support orders overall for equal-shared and unequal-father-more, although when an order was made the father was the liable parent in 78% of cases when he had more time than the mother and 97% in equal-time cases. No mothers were liable when they had more time and higher incomes. Brown, Joung and Berger (2006: 41) suggest that this indicates less desire for child support by fathers; orders not made where the liability would have been quite small; or parents agreeing to cover costs when the child was with them.

3.1.2 ***Nordic studies***

The other country with work relevant to this research question is Norway.⁴² The focus on gender equality in family policy in Nordic countries and gender norms of sharing caregiving are probable reasons for this research interest. As in the US (see, for example, Stewart 1999; Sousa & Sorensen 2006), the Norwegian studies comparing nonresident mothers and fathers use large representative datasets.

Thuen (2006) examined the psychosocial aspects of parenting for 1,823 nonresident parents ($n=145$ mothers) six years after separation. Parents were identified from the National Insurance register and from the Norwegian Joint Custody Association. Although no significant differences were found between nonresident parents in regular contact or satisfaction with the arrangements, mothers were more likely than fathers to report anxiety or depression (48% compared with 28%).

Kitterod (2006) compared non-resident parents using data from the Contact Arrangements and Child Maintenance survey 2004, a cross-sectional survey of separated parents undertaken by Statistics Norway to evaluate the 2003 child support reforms. The 2004 survey involved 3,582 separated parents ($n=155$ nonresident mothers) and included 1,020 former couples (Kitterod & Lyngstad 2011). Kitterod (2006) found nonresident mothers saw their children more often; were more likely to share time; and lived closer to their children than nonresident fathers. Confirming findings from Thuen (2006), nonresident mothers were polarised at low and high incomes. To ensure findings did not reflect an exaggeration of the actual amount of time that nonresident mothers spent with their children, Kitterod re-did her analysis using data from resident parents confirming that the differences did exist. She concluded that this research supported Stewart's gender role hypothesis (see Stewart 1999b) that mothers have more time with their children even when other differences are taken into account. (Another Norwegian study

⁴² There was an earlier study of nonresident parents and contact patterns undertaken in 1996 (Jensen & Clausen 1997) where tentative findings were made about nonresident mothers ($n=46$). This study is only available in Norwegian.

using the same dataset and theoretical approach to compare nonresident mothers' and fathers' payment of child support is reviewed in Section 3.3.)

3.1.3 ***Studies from other countries***

While child support was covered more frequently in the nonresident mother literature in the 2000s than previously, this was mainly the case in the US and Norway. Child support is largely absent from the nonresident mother research in Canada (Kruk 2010, 2015; Thacker 2005), with the exception of several auto-ethnographic studies (Eicher-Catt 2004; Gustafson 2001) which referred to the personal experience of being a nonresident mother and liable parent.

Similarly in New Zealand, nonresident mother research appears aimed at family therapists assisting mothers struggling with reconciling their mother and 'nonresident' mother role (Snowdon & Kotzé 2012). Where liable mothers are included in child support research, either numbers were too small to discuss in detail (Horwood 2004) or, where sufficient to report separately (for example, 25% of liable parents with an Inland Revenue case in 2009 were mothers), the analytical approach used was to aggregate the liable parent data (Colmar Brunton 2009). The latter approach, similarly adopted with large representative datasets in the UK (see, for example, Wikeley et al. 2008), suggests a specific policy focus for non-compliance on liable *parents*, and that gender is not perceived as relevant and/or that child support in lone mother households is prioritised.

Some Canadian (Kruk 2010) and New Zealand (Elizabeth 2017) work featured the role of domestic violence post-separation. It focused on coercive control and the use of what Elizabeth (2017) has labelled 'custody stalking', as a method to undermine the mothering role; in some circumstances, with the outcome reduced or no time with their child. Although the researchers make no explicitly link to a child support liability for the mother, this is a potential additional consequence, as seen in the US work above. In the UK, the small amount of work with

nonresident mothers is predominantly based on case studies from clinical practice (see, for example, Hart 2008); or, like the New Zealand work, aggregated liable parent/nonresident parent reports (for example, Atkinson & McKay 2005; Morris 2007; Peacey & Haux 2007).

One UK exception was Kielty's (2005, 2008a) narrative study of 20 nonresident mothers. Participants were recruited via the support group MATCH, a common source for UK studies. Using a psychosocial theoretical framework Kielty (2008b: 376) examined how nonresident mothers retained a view of themselves as a 'good mother' and constructed either 'justification or resistance narratives to defend against a "bad mother" label'. The mothers in Kielty's (2006b: 82) study

[f]elt that they already supported their children by continuing the provision of practical everyday items such as clothing and school equipment and by meeting other child care costs such as haircuts and day care fees.

Kielty (2006b) highlighted the difficulty in comparing nonresident mothers with nonresident fathers because the two strands of work tend to focus on different issues. The nonresident mother research focuses on pathways into this role and qualitative aspects of the mother-child relationship rather than difficulties with 'contact' and child support, the focus of nonresident father research. Majority-time father arrangements and the non-normative behaviour of payment of child support by mothers were identified by Kielty as requiring further examination.

Kielty's work reinforced themes raised by US researchers such as Bemiller (2005) and Herrerias (2008): the need to be seen as a 'good' mother, particularly when mothers had not voluntarily chosen to live apart from their child, and in-kind and other support as part of financial responsibility for separated mothers.

3.2 Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?

This section reviews the international literature relevant to the second research question, are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers. There is little international research that details compliance from nonresident mothers' or liable mothers' reports. The existing research

tends to focus on payment or relies on reports from other sources. For example, the latest US census data show that the receipt of child support by resident fathers and resident mothers with a child support order was not statistically different: 41% of fathers and 46% of mothers received all the payments due (Grall 2016). Nonetheless, several US studies provided some information from nonresident parents' reports. These are discussed below.

Stewart (1999b) used the 1987–88 National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), a national probability sample of 13,008 respondents, to examine the interaction between nonresident parents and their children. The NSFH provided detailed socio-demographic characteristics of nonresident parents ($n=531$ fathers and $n=156$ mothers) and included a substantial number of children in nonparental care with grandparents or other relatives.

Although this study was predominantly about differences in contact with children (mail, phone or in-person) and payment overall rather than compliance, Stewart's work is relevant as it provides detailed analysis of payment from nonresident parents' reports. This study highlighted a statistically significant difference between parents in child support payment: 75% of fathers and 32% of mothers paid something. Stewart (1999: 901) noted that this difference reflected that children with a nonresident mother were often in nonparental care where child support was rarely ordered. Further, mothers were more likely to pay when children lived with other relatives than with their father (36% compared with 27%). Another important finding was that although mothers had more frequent phone and written contact and longer periods of time with their child than fathers, payment was associated with frequency of contact for fathers but not for mothers (Stewart 1999b: 903).

A few US studies reported on compliance rates (that is, where parents were expected to pay). However, unlike the work on non-payment, there is little evidence that liable mothers are less compliant than liable fathers using liable mothers' reports. Greif (1997a) surveyed 187 previously-married parents who never saw at least one of their children ($n=109$

fathers and 76 mothers). Compared with his earlier work (Greif 1986), parents were asked whether they were required to pay child support and then what they actually paid. Although mothers were less likely to have an order to pay (41 % compared with 66% of fathers), 86% of mothers and 80% of fathers 'always paid'. (Greif 1997a: 81). Another US quantitative studies ($n=294$ nonresident fathers and $n=100$ nonresident mothers) found that liable mothers and liable fathers reported a similar high rate of compliance (Pearson & Anhalt 1994).

This positive view has some support from work that used administrative data. This US study of arrears cases similar in purpose to the Becerra and Ong (2001) study discussed above (see Section 3.1.1), tracked a random sample of 6,653 cases with arrears in the Virginia state caseload ($n=490$ mothers). Myers (2004) found that although mothers were 12% of liable parents, only 7.4% of liable parents with arrears were mothers, and mothers owed just 6% of all arrears. Mothers' share of arrears was lower because mothers' average amount ordered was smaller (\$142 per month compared with \$220 for fathers). Mothers with arrears were significantly less likely to make payments within three months and within 12 months, and payments were significantly smaller than found for fathers. Myers noted that mothers had less capacity to pay ongoing child support and arrears because of lower employment and earnings. This research suggests that liable mothers as a group were less likely to be in arrears but once they were behind in their payments were slower at clearing their debt at least in this group of parents with arrears.

Herrerias (2008) surveyed 285 mothers who lived apart from one or more of their children. Compared with her study 20 years before (Herrerias 1984), child support was more salient: 77% of mothers with an order paid all or more than the amount due. Another 6% paid even though child support was not ordered. Some mothers reported that they earned less than the father and paid nothing by agreement. In addition, 71% of mothers paid for other items such as clothes and school-related expenses (Herrerias 2008: 19). Herrerias highlighted that the majority of mothers felt it was essential that they contributed whether by child support or in-

kind regardless of whether the time they spent with their children was as frequent or satisfactory as they preferred.

Benson and Pasley (1993), in their small study of 74 remarried parents who paid or received child support ($n=10$ liable mothers), found 90% of mothers and fathers were compliant. Further, mothers paid the same or more after remarriage. The researchers suggest that this positive picture was probably because the respondents came from higher income households.

Differences in compliance by gender do not appear to have been explored in any published empirical work on compliance in the UK. Data from one unpublished study on factors predicting compliance (McKay & Atkinson 2005) cited in Atkinson and McKay (2005: 38) showed that gender was associated with payment: fathers were more likely to pay than mothers. However, it is unclear whether McKay and Atkinson's conclusion refers to compliance or payment as this was not discussed further. Mothers are also less likely to pay in Norway (Lyngstad 2010), although again this may not mean mothers are less compliant. (This study is discussed further in Section 3.3.)

One other study is worth mentioning under this research question. Smock and Manning (1997) used matched former couples ($n=220$ couples, 19% with a nonresident mother) from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics to compare parents' reports of child support paid. (Information was not available on whether there was an order in place.) Contrary to other research restricted to nonresident fathers and resident mothers (for example, Braver, Fitzpatrick & Bay 1991), there was no significant difference in reported payments between liable parents and their ex-partners. Like the Benson and Paisley work, Smock and Manning note that parents' better economic circumstances may explain higher agreement on amounts paid and received in this small study.

3.3 What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?

This section reviews the international literature relevant to the third research question: what are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by

liable mothers? Again, the research is sparse and generally focuses on non-payment rather than compliance. As detailed previously, non-payment frequently relates to no order for child support in place either because it was not ordered or the father did not request an order. These reasons are not discussed further in this section.

Greif and Pabst's (1988:143) survey of 577 nonresident mothers undertaken in the 1980s—at a time when child support payment was not often ordered—found that mothers who paid did so because they were required by the court; it was the fair thing to do; and it entitled them to greater involvement in their children's lives. Non-payers reported that they could not afford it; the judge or the father did not require it; or their husband did not pay when the children were with the mother.

Three more recent studies provide some detail about why payment was not made; one qualitative study from the US (Bemiller 2005) and two based on survey data from other countries: Lau (2007) in Hong Kong and Lyngstad (2010) in Norway. Although these mainly related to non-payment rather than non-compliance, they are reviewed here as context to the statistical testing of the approach adopted by the present study.

In Bemiller's (2005) qualitative study, ten out of 16 mothers interviewed had an order to pay child support but only three were currently paying. Two other mothers provided substantial in-kind support by agreement in lieu of a formal child support order. The judge did not order child support for four mothers (two where the father did not want payment). Mothers who paid none of their child support liability ($n=7/10$) reported that their financial circumstances meant they could not afford to pay. In contrast to the guilt expressed by the mothers about any inability to 'live up to dominant expectations of mothering' (Bemiller 2005: 157), non-paying mothers did not express any guilt for non-payment of child support, suggesting that payment should not be expected because of their financial circumstances (Bemiller 2005: 100–102).

Lau (2007) in her small study of 45 Chinese nonresident parents in Hong Kong ($n=13$ mothers) referred from welfare agencies, reported that

mothers were less likely to pay formal child support but found no significant difference in major or small informal support. Utilising a family systems theoretical framework, Lau (2007: 53) concluded that the provision of financial support by nonresident mothers and fathers reflected 'flexibility in traditional cultural values,...gender role attitude and shared kinship'.

Lyngstad (2010), using the same 2004 survey data as Kitterod (2006) discussed in Section 3.1.2, and administrative data from National Insurance in Norway, explored why few nonresident mothers paid child support.⁴³ He found one-in-six nonresident parents were mothers. Mothers were less likely to pay than nonresident fathers (31% compared with 85%). Like Kitterod (2006), Lyngstad utilised the theoretical approach developed by Stewart (1999b). However, he only tested the gender role and the selection hypothesis. The 'no difference' hypothesis was not relevant as child support rates did differ. Some of the difference in payment between mothers and fathers was explained by mothers' lower incomes and more overnights (24% of mothers reported 13 or more nights a month). Lyngstad concluded that even taking these differences into account, mothers still paid less often than fathers, suggesting that traditional gender roles could have some impact.

Of note, some of the difference in payment found by Lyngstad, and the higher income nonresident mothers previously identified by Kitterod (2006), may be because of shared-time. As in Norway people can only be registered at one address, parents with shared-time children may register a child each or those with one child, register the child in alternate years (see Kitterod & Lyngstad 2011). Parents with a shared-time child registered as living with the other parent would therefore be classified as a 'nonresident' parent for the purposes of survey sampling. Further, higher income parents with equal-time can be liable under the Norwegian

⁴³ Nonresident and liable mothers were also a research subject in Sweden where 17% of children have majority-time with their father and 18% shared-time (Stjernstrom & Stromgren 2012). None of the Swedish child support studies are available in English.

child support rules. It is unclear what impact this may have had on compliance (Hakovirta & Rantalaaho 2011).

One possible reason for non-compliance advanced by Stirling and Aldrich (2012) is worth mentioning. Their US study concluded that nonresident mothers were worse-off post-separation than nonresident fathers, and both resident fathers and resident mothers (see Section 3.1.1). They posited that a ‘substitution effect’ could apply whereby, because of low income, time spent with children may substitute for cash child support. Unfortunately, Stirling and Aldrich were unable to be tested their hypothesis with the data available.

3.4 The role of gender: studies with other respondents

The present literature review concentrates on nonresident and liable mothers’ reports. This section discusses three studies that used large datasets and resident father/carer responses on receipt of child support to explore the role of gender in the payment of child support.⁴⁴ The first work from the US (Stewart 2004, 2010) mainly focuses on payment, although some findings refer to parents with an order for payment. The second study from Jamaica (Wyss 2001) uses census data on child support receipts. The final study from the US (Kanazawa and Still 2000) relates to compliance, defined as annual liability paid in full. This work compliments the research on reasons for non-payment discussed above.

Stewart (2004, 2010) used the National Survey of America’s Families (NSAF) to examine financial contributions towards children made by nonresident mothers and fathers and face-to-face contact in different living arrangements (that is, married or cohabiting stepfamily, relative care or foster care) highlighting the ‘complex family realities of children with nonresident parents’ (Stewart 2004: 10). Sampling for the NSAF targeted low-income households with methods that increased inclusion such as utilising mobile phones for those without a landline; a group

⁴⁴ The early US study by Meyer and Garasky (1993), while one of the first with a child support focus, is not discussed in this literature review as it reported on characteristics of custodial fathers rather than liable mothers and findings are from the 1980s. The studies in this section are limited to more recent work.

omitted when using random digit dialling. The respondent was the ‘most knowledgeable adult’ in the household, not always a parent of the identified children. Importantly, the NSAF asked about all child support payments not just those paid under an order and, unlike other surveys such as the Census, questions about child support were not restricted to parents. Information was based on 2,006 children with a nonresident mother and 11,079 with a nonresident father.

Stewart (2004) tested whether an individualist perspective (differences in parenting styles related to gender) or a structuralist perspective (differences related to conditions encountered) explained the expected differences. This approach was previously adopted to examine differences in single-mother and single-father households (Downey 1994, 1995; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell & Dufur 1998). Stewart (2010) found that 21% of nonresident mothers and 42% of nonresident fathers paid child support in the last 12 months. Fathers were also significantly more likely to pay than mothers when restricted to parents with a child support order. This latter finding suggests that, based on resident parents’ and other carers’ reports, nonresident fathers were significantly more compliant than nonresident mothers.

Stepmother families were more likely to receive child support, and higher amounts, than single fathers⁴⁵ which Stewart (2010: 1088) suggested may be because repartnered fathers had a new partner who ‘pressures him to collect child support’. Overall, fathers were more likely to pay child support and mothers to see their children more than once a week. Stewart (2010: 1087) concluded that parental roles ‘still at least partially reflect traditional notions of motherhood...and fatherhood’, a similar conclusion to the one reached in the Norwegian research comparing nonresident mothers and fathers (see, for example, Kitterod 2006; Lyngstad 2010). The quantum of difference between parents may be overestimated as Stewart excluded in-kind contributions (such as

⁴⁵ Grandparents, other relatives and nonparent carers were more likely to receive payments than single fathers.

clothes, toys and toiletries) frequently paid by mothers underestimating mothers' total financial contributions.

In the second study also concerning payment of child support, Wyss (2001: 417) used household level data from a nationally representative survey, the 1989 Jamaican Survey of Living Conditions, to 'highlight how gender shapes cash child support outcomes and implications'. Wyss adopted a feminist critique of the neo-classical economic theory of child support (Weiss & Willis 1985, 1989; Willis 2000), determining that rather than being gender-neutral, 'gender-differentiated assets, rules, norms and preferences' (Wyss 2001: 420) were relevant. Wyss notes the view of another feminist economist (Folbre 1994) that the high costs of raising children mean that both parents have an incentive to not contribute but women have less opportunity to default.

Nonetheless, Wyss (2001: 423) hypothesised that fathers would pay more child support than nonresident mothers because 'breadwinning continues to be more closely associated with fatherhood than motherhood'. Of the 5,917 children in the survey Wyss found that 24% lived apart from their mother. Nonresident mothers were significantly less likely to pay child support than nonresident fathers, although fathers also had a low rate (less than 30% paid). Wyss concluded that Jamaican norms of gender behaviour explained why both men and women paid little child support, noting less community pressure for mothers to pay. Further, Wyss suggested the reasons for being nonresident (such as young age, disability or leaving for employment) made mothers' child support behaviour less predictable. As incomes were inferred from nonresident parents' education qualification, Wyss conceded that mothers' ability to pay could have an impact. Additionally, information about in-kind support was not collected and this could be contributed instead of cash child support.

In the third study, Kanazawa and Still (2000) analysed 1992 US census data to test their evolutionary psychological model of parental involvement where parental investment decisions were interdependent. Although they predicted that mothers would be less motivated to leave

children and to under-invest in them after separation, they found that this was only true for mothers' time post-separation. Mothers were significantly less likely to comply with their child support order (here measured as proportion of annual liability paid). Two reasons were advanced: men's generally greater financial resources and therefore more discretionary income, and nonresident mothers were a highly select group who either did not want custody or were deemed unsuitable. They concluded that the same factors selecting mothers into the minority parent role made them less able to pay child support.

3.5 Findings and research gaps

This section summarises the relevant key findings from the international literature and identifies theoretical and research gaps that the present study seeks to address.

3.5.1 *Theoretical framework and methodology*

The international nonresident mother literature mainly utilises feminist, and/or symbolic interaction theoretical frameworks to explore and explain the mother role. (Role theory and psychosocial frameworks are also represented.) Most work is qualitative with self-selected samples of mothers. Child support, if mentioned, is given less importance than other aspects of mothering, although this has evolved over time particularly in the US and Norway.

In contrast to the nonresident mother work, the research exploring differences between nonresident mothers and fathers often involves large, nationally representative surveys or administrative data. While providing socio-demographic data on nonresident mothers and fathers, this work mainly focuses on payment rather than compliance and tends to use reports on payment/compliance from other sources (resident parents or carers) on child support rather than nonresident parents' reports. Some of this work lacks a theoretical framework. The exceptions are the qualitative work from Cozzolino (2014) who uses economic sociology to explore differing meanings of child support monies in the US, and Lyngstad (2010) who tests whether gender role or selection into the

minority-time parent role better explains gender differences in child support payment in Norway. The latter approach follows on from the work of Stewart (1999) in the US and Kitterod (2006) in Norway focusing on differences between nonresident parents on socio-demographic characteristics and parenting-time. A later study by Stewart (2004, 2010) tests whether an individualist or a structuralist perspective better explains gender differences in child support payment using resident parents' and carers' reports of payments.

The use of a feminist theoretical framework and a quantitative methodology in the present study will build on this previous work on minority-time mothers and differences in child support orders and/or any child support paid (for example, Lyngstad 2010 and Stewart 1999; 2010) to further explore liability and shared-time parenting, and reasons (if any) for liable mothers' non-compliance.

3.5.2 ***Findings from the international literature***

A common finding across the literature is that nonresident mothers continue to define themselves as 'mothers' and that gendered expectations and behaviours of nonresident mothers and fathers differed. In the studies reviewed, nonresident mothers spent more time with their children and often had another child resident in their household. In addition, mothers, even those with minority-time, were less often liable to pay child support, and liabilities were generally lower. Mothers' lower incomes were frequently given as the reason for changes in their child's living arrangements. Notably, domestic violence, particularly coercive behaviour, was a feature of the US research and was reported by most nonresident mothers in the more recent qualitative studies (Bemiller 2008, Herrerias 2008).

The research on liable mothers' compliance and reasons for non-compliance is considerably smaller. A consistent finding across the literature was that *nonresident* mothers were less likely to *pay* child support than nonresident fathers. However, the limited literature does not show that liable mothers are less likely to comply when ordered to

pay based on their own reports. US studies with self-selected participants showing mothers with an order to pay child support report similar compliance to liable fathers (see, for example, Greif 1997; Pearson & Anhalt 1994). The one US study using administrative data (Meyers 2004) shows liable mothers' share of child support arrears was less than their representation in the caseload.

The qualitative studies in the US that detail reasons for non-payment, often report that payment was not ordered or needed, with no payment by agreement in some cases (see for example, Bemiller 2005).

Affordability was also mentioned in several studies (Becerra & Ong 2001; Greif & Pabst 1988; Herrerias 2008) either as a reason for no payment required or not made as expected. Many mothers contributed something in-kind (see for example, Kiely 2006b). Gender and/or mothers' higher parenting-time are posed as possible reasons for non-payment in the Norwegian (Lyngstad 2010), and US research (Stirling & Aldrich 2012), and in a small study in Hong Kong (Lau 2007), although not explored further. Studies with resident fathers and other respondents have also highlighted gender as influential.

3.5.3 ***Relevance and research gaps***

This literature review provides some broad brush-strokes for understanding the demography and dynamics around child support and gender. Of interest, the international work provides a more detailed analysis of nonresident mothers and the mother role, and comparisons with nonresident fathers than the Australian literature. In contrast, compliance rates were frequently mentioned in the recent Australian research but largely absent from the international work.

But how applicable are the international findings for Australia? Child support is context specific. Differences in law and policies, different social and economic conditions, cultural expectations and gender specific norms of 'good' mothering and fathering in countries covered by the literature restrict transferability. Court-based systems allow more discretion than administrative systems. Mothers deemed to have lower

parental competency (for example, poor mental health) are unlikely to be awarded all or majority-time of their children and unlikely to be ordered to pay child support in judicial contexts (Teachman & Polonko 1990). Further, parental negotiations may operate differently in shared-time or where the father has majority-time, resulting in no or lower child support orders (Seltzer & Maralani 2001). Personal preference could be influential for employed majority-time fathers who have no requirement to pursue payment.

In Australia, child support is calculated by an administrative formula that determines the liability based on income and parenting-time of the liable parent with no discretion to consider whether this is the mother or the father, or how the parenting arrangements were determined. This means that child support can be payable based on actual overnights with the child even where this may not correspond with previous court orders or agreements on parenting-time between parents.⁴⁶ Changes in parenting-time or living arrangements can be notified over the phone and processed immediately—and any corresponding change in which parent is liable in the case.

Further, the Australian child support system appears to have gradually drifted away from a state-enforced collection to one based largely on a philosophy of voluntary payment. Around half (53%) of cases are Private Collect, that is, parents transfer payments between themselves. In the other half of cases where Child Support Collect applies, only a third (36%) of liable parents have deductions from salary and wages, which is the dominant collection method used in the US.⁴⁷ This suggests that motivation to pay plays a larger role in Australia.

The US and Norwegian work point to gender affecting the payment of child support by mothers. This work involves two diametrically opposite

⁴⁶ See Child Support Guide <<http://guide.dss.gov.au/child-support-guide/2/2/4>> (viewed 24 August 2017)

⁴⁷ The share of private payments directly to the Child Support Program (via electronic bank transfer or payment at the Post Office) increased from 31% in 1998 to 50% in 2009, while the share from deductions from wages and salaries decreased from 53% to 36% (Child Support Agency 2009a: 45). The latter are generally only used when voluntary payment has been unsuccessful.

profiles of mothers: young, low income, racially diverse mothers in the US, half with children in nonparental or foster care, and middle-class mothers in Norway whose children are in shared or majority-time with their father.

The present study will explore the profile of liable mothers in Australia. It is probable that this profile will differ from that detailed in the international nonresident mother and child research. Nonparental carers are a negligible group in the Australian Scheme.⁴⁸ On the other hand, parents in Norway generally have egalitarian attitudes to parenting with dual-earner couples where both parents are in full-time employment and fathers encouraged by the State to share day-to-day caregiving of young children. Shared-time can generate a liability under the formula in Australia highlighting that parents with equal-time or more time than the other parent can be included in liable mother and not solely minority-time mothers.

Most of the research indicating that nonresident mothers were less likely to pay did not refer to compliance and/or did not rely on nonresident mothers' own reports. Further, no studies systematically explored liable mothers' non-compliance. When compliance was referenced this was either in small, qualitative studies or the measure varied across studies making comparisons with the broader compliance work challenging. The present study will use a comprehensive measure of compliance (that is, the expected payment made in full and on time) complemented by other detailed measures of financial contributions.

The present study will seek to (i) confirm whether the lack of difference in liable mothers' self-reported compliance found in the US work applies in Australia or whether there is any difference in compliance by gender using data from a representative sample of liable parents; (ii) explore

⁴⁸ In Australia, nonparent carers can claim child support against one or both parents but are not required to meet the MAT. Child support legislation excludes most foster carers from claiming child support. There were 3,900 nonparent carers in the Scheme caseload in December 2010 out of 1,330,500 payers and payees (FaHCSIA cited in Australian Law Reform Commission 2012: 326).

whether reasons for any non-compliance by liable mothers are related to gender or whether other factors are relevant.

Chapter 4 Methodology

This thesis uses data from the Australian National University Child Support Reform Study (CSRS).⁴⁹ The CSRS is based on a national random sample of 5,046 parents registered with the Child Support Agency in 2008. The aim of the study was to explore the impact of child support reform on separated families. Information was collected about parents' circumstances, experiences of, and attitudes to, the child support system prior to, and after, the new formula was introduced on 1 July 2008. The study comprises three waves of data: pre-reform baseline Time 0, and two follow-up waves: Time 1, 20–24 months later and Time 2, another 18–25 months later. Time 1 was around eighteen months post-reform and Time 2 around three years post-reform. The study also involved two supplementary waves of data collected from recently separated parents (those who separated in the second half of 2008 and the second half of 2009) who entered the Scheme after the reforms.⁵⁰

4.1 How the baseline sample was selected

The in-scope population for the study was English-speaking parents who had an active Child Support Agency case in 2008, were separated or divorced from their child's other parent and had at least one biological or adopted child under 18 years living with either parent. The unit of selection was the case, not the individual. A national random sample of 50,000 cases was drawn, stratified by: (i) time since separation (separated in the last 6 months of 2006; separated prior to 1 July 2006); (ii) level of 'care' (based on original Scheme categories: 75% 'sole'; 25%

⁴⁹ The baseline data collection was funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), now the Department of Social Services: the government department responsible for child support policy. Significant in-kind support was provided by the Child Support Agency (CSA): access to the sample from the active caseload and technical support. The follow-up and supplementary surveys were funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage grant (Grant LP0989558) with support from FaHCSIA and CSA as Industry Partners. The Chief Investigators at ANU were Dr Bruce Smyth and Dr Bryan Rodgers (with Dr Jeromey Temple until 2010) with research assistance from Dr Vu Son and Dr Liz Allen. The Industry Partner Investigators were Dr Marian Esler and Maria Vnuk (FaHCSIA) and Allan Shephard (CSA).

⁵⁰ The supplementary samples each involved 1,000 recently separated parents. These data were not examined in the present study because of the smaller numbers of parents interviewed, and therefore few liable-mother cases.

‘shared-time’⁵¹; (iii) method of collection (50% Private Collect; 50% Child Support Collect); (iv) geographical location (state/territory; rural/urban); and (v) gender (50% female; 50% male). Shared-time arrangements and recent cases were oversampled to ensure that there were a sufficient number of cases to make analysis of these groups statistically robust.

A Primary Approach Letter was mailed to 16,654 potential respondents selected from the original extract of 50,000 cases. Around 2,000 letters were returned (12%) because the respondent was not known at the address provided. A total of 79,797 calls were placed to the 14,785 sample records to which calls were initiated. Telephone numbers that resulted in no answer, engaged or answering machine on first contact were recontacted (some up to 15 times) until an interview time or refusal was obtained.⁵² In total 5,046 interviews were successfully completed. The response rate was 67% based on interviews as a proportion of interviews and refusals of all types. Almost all (98%) respondents agreed to be recontacted at a later date for future research.⁵³

4.1.1 ***Procedure and survey content***

Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) of 25 minutes duration were conducted with 2,237 fathers and 2,809 mothers. Respondents were interviewed between 21 February and 26 April 2008 (the day before a large national advertising campaign about the revised Scheme began).

The CATI interview schedule comprised eight key sections: (i) family type and relationship history; (ii) children’s living arrangements, and parent–child ‘contact’; (iii) legal process; (iv) child support (regular and other financial support for children); (v) agreements, negotiations and strategic bargaining; (vi) family dynamics (including relationship quality, and

⁵¹ This was based on definitions that applied under the Scheme when the survey was conducted: sole (70% or more nights) and shared (at least 30% of nights with each parent). This information was based on CSA records just prior to the start of the fieldwork and may not reflect respondents’ actual arrangements at interview.

⁵² Re-calling each unanswered number several times over the fieldwork period assisted in maximising the number of ex-partners dyads where both parents were interviewed.

⁵³ Follow-up interviews with 3,958 respondents from Time 0 were completed at Time 1 20–24 months later and 2,927 respondents at Time 2 3-years later.

conflict in the past 12 months); (vii) parenting and family wellbeing; and (viii) demographic information.

Detailed questions were asked about one child of the relationship (hereafter ‘focal child’) chosen randomly from all children in the case. The initial response on usual living arrangements of this child with the respondent determined whether further questions referred to time with them or the other parent, including number of overnights and days without staying overnight. Limited information was collected on other children.⁵⁴

To disentangle differences between non-payment because of no current liability and non-compliance—a frequent problem in this research as noted previously—the questionnaire included a detailed module on child support and other financial contributions made by the liable parent. A particular focus was to determine whether a payment was expected and, if so, what was actually paid. Respondents who confirmed that they currently paid or received child support were asked about timeliness and in-kind contributions made instead of, or in addition to, the expected payment. Detailed information was collected from parents who reported that another arrangement replaced cash child support.

The questionnaire comprised closed, scale or Likert format questions, with a few open questions. Those relevant for child support were: *What is the main reason that you do not currently pay/receive any child support?*, *What is the main reason that you transfer child support payments privately and not through the CSA?*, and for parents with other arrangements, *What is this arrangement?*⁵⁵

4.1.2 **Weights**

Design and response weights for individuals, cases, and dyads were developed based on the Scheme caseload at the time of sample

⁵⁴ Information was collected on living arrangements with the same response choices plus ‘lives independently, has left home’ as an option not read out, to be inclusive of young adult children.

⁵⁵ The other open questions were about the main reason for (i) rarely or never seeing the child and (ii) never staying overnight.

extraction. The weights took into account the oversamples of shared-time arrangements and recently separated cases. The results are generalisable to the active caseload for parents who previously lived together.⁵⁶

Statistical analyses are weighted; the number of respondents reported in the text and tables are unweighted.

4.1.3 **Former couple sample**

A unique feature of the study's design was the collection of data from both parents in 1,064 former couples, around 40% of the sample.⁵⁷

Data from both parents in the child support case are valuable to compare views of post-separation financial arrangements such as child support and in-kind payments. Information from the former couple sample is used to further explore compliance.

4.2 **Determining final sample sizes for liable parents and payees**

Determining group membership for analyses was more complex than expected. Although the case was the unit of sample selection for the CSRS, parents with shared-time and split-residence often had mirror cases: each parent was a 'payer' *and* a 'payee'.⁵⁸

Key questions were used to define membership of the four groups: liable mothers, liable fathers, payee mothers and payee fathers. Liable parent was defined by: (i) "yes, pay" to: *Do you currently pay any child support to or receive any child support from (former partner)?*; or (ii) "respondent pays more" to: *So on balance who ends up paying more money?* for parents who both pay and receive; or (iii) "yes, I should be paying/former partner should be receiving" to: *Is child support meant to be paid?* Payees were similarly defined. Excluded were parents (mainly those with no current liability) who reported (i) "50/50 cancels out" ($n=109$); or (ii) "no", "don't know" or "refused" ($n=318$) for whether they should pay and 25

⁵⁶ Most parents who never lived together were excluded from the sample because they had missing data on a key selection criterion: date of separation.

⁵⁷ All respondents' data remained anonymous. Only after the survey was completed could data be matched by a 'case' to see if former couple data existed. This means that respondents and interviewers did not know if both former partners participated.

⁵⁸ A parent can have more than one case where children are from *different* relationships.

respondents who did not know if they had another arrangement and were not asked if they should pay.

Excluded parents may contribute money or in-kind support regardless of formal expectations but the direction cannot be definitively established from the data nor is it clear whether a parent with no current liability perceives themselves as a ‘payer’ regardless of the Child Support Agency’s broad definition.

Two additional pieces of information were used where available: survey responses from the former couple sample and basic information on the direction of net liability for mirror cases. The latter were influential for determining liable mothers (55% had these data). Some respondents were excluded from the analytic sample based on information from these two sources. Specifically, to allow comparisons of responses of former couples, only liable parent/payee ex-couples were included. This resulted in the exclusion of 19 former couples where both (i) were payees; (ii) were liable; or (iii) had no current liability. One ex-couple where both were male was excluded.

Similarly, using the mirror data, 70 parents were excluded because the direction of payment transfer for the child support period that applied at sample extraction was inconsistent with survey responses or the current liability (or net liability) was \$0.

Parents with both ex-couple and mirror data with one match⁵⁹ were included as there was no reason to preference one information source over another. Twelve parents with inconsistent data from these sources were excluded.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Discrepant reports by former couples can partly be explained by time between data extraction and interview, with changes in parenting arrangements or income resulting in differences in which parent was liable at interview. A third of former partners ($n=7/21$) had interviews 2–6 weeks apart. For some parents with one match, their former partner was already excluded from the analysis as he/she reported the same response (that is, pay/pay or receive/receive) or was neither a liable parent nor a payee.

⁶⁰ For example, the mirror data indicate the father should pay, the father reported that he should receive and the mother reported 50/50 split cancelled out payment.

Some parents reported that cash child support had been replaced by “some other arrangement” ($n=303$) and were not asked whether they *should* be paying or receiving child support. The same methodology was used to determine whether to include these respondents as liable parents or payees. First, those without ex-couple or mirror data were allocated based on the sample frame.⁶¹ Second, respondents in the former couple sample and no mirror case were deemed to be the liable parent where their former partner was a payee, and vice versa. As the focus of the present study is payment of child support, 28 parents who both reported another arrangement and 26 whose ex-partner said payments cancel out or they were neither meant to pay or receive were excluded. Third, net liability was used for those with mirror data leading to the exclusion of 32 parents with no current liability. An additional 12 parents were excluded as they had both sources of information and neither matched. (These were different from the other 12 parents excluded.)

The final analytic sample comprised 4,381 liable parents and payees. Of this sample 185 were liable mothers. Table 4.1 shows the unweighted sample sizes for the four groups of interest for the analyses and the distribution of parents in the five groups in the total CSRS original sample of 5,046. Parents in the ‘neither’ group are not included in the analyses except for Section 5.1 on liability by gender where the total dataset is used.

⁶¹ Where both former couple data and mirror data were available, respondents were included where net liability and one parent’s response matched and the other parent had another arrangement which reflected this. (Responses from the open question *What is this arrangement?* were used to confirm this decision.)

Table 4.1 Final analytic sample

Group name and definition	Numbers (unweighted)
<i>Liabile mothers</i> : pay or should pay child support to fathers	185
<i>Liabile fathers</i> : pay or should pay child support to mothers	1,692
<i>Payee mothers</i> : receive or should receive child support from fathers	2,296
<i>Payee fathers</i> : receive or should receive child support from mothers	208
<i>Subtotal</i>	4,381
<i>Neither</i> : mothers and fathers not meant to pay or receive child support	665
Total	5,046

Notes: 'Neither' includes parents who were omitted because of contradictory information and one former couple where both were male.

Table 4.2 defines the liable-mother and liable-father dyads that is, former couples where both parents were interviewed.

Table 4.2 Former couple sample

Dyad type	Number of former couples
<i>Liabile-mother dyad</i> : liable mothers and payee fathers	78
<i>Liabile-father dyad</i> : liable fathers and payee mothers	827

Notes: Liable parent and payee former couples only. Excludes one former couple where both were male.

By including parents with other arrangements where the liable parent could be determined, a broad definition of liable parent and payee was adopted. This inclusion allows in-depth exploration of post-separation financial arrangements and highlights the complexity of on-the-ground child support arrangements outside bureaucratic definitions of liable parent or payee, particularly for shared-time and split-residence parents. On the other hand, by excluding parents who reported being neither liable nor a payee and those where ex-couple and/or mirror data did not match, a conservative definition was used, sacrificing some statistical power for conceptual clarity in the liable mother and payee father subgroups.

4.3 Statistical method

Analyses in Chapters 5–9 used Stata 13.1 (Statacorp 2009) and the survey (*svy*) commands appropriate for weighted data. Analyses use Time 0 data collected under the original Scheme rules (refer to Section 1.2.1)

in 2008. Time 0 data were used to maximise sample size for comparisons and modelling.⁶²

4.4 **Variables used in the analyses**

This section details variables used in the analyses. First socio-demographic measures, family dynamics and wellbeing are outlined. This is followed by the child support, in-kind contributions and compliance measures.

4.4.1 ***Socio-demographic, family dynamics and wellbeing measures***

Household composition was derived from questions detailing relationships between adults and children in and outside the household. Four categories were determined based on whether the respondent lived with a current partner and had any 'resident' children, that is, children in the household at least 50% of the time.

Employment was measured by two variables: hours of work, and type of employment. The latter derived variable takes account of gendered differences in employment and uses categories developed by Baxter, Gray, Hand and Hayes (2012) that divide part-time employment into 'short' (1–20 hours) and 'long' (21–34 hours). The present study used their definition of long part-time hours as a proxy for job quality (for example, permanent part-time public sector work with flexible start and finish times and benefits such as carer's leave⁶³), and short-part-time-hours denoting casual or lower skilled employment which Baxter and her colleagues indicate are associated with disadvantage.

The personal and household income variables were derived by ANU researchers from questions about personal income from all sources, and,

⁶² Data from later waves of the CSRS contain fewer liable mothers because (i) a substantial number of cases with a liable mother at T0 had a focal child who was aged over 18 years by 2009–10 and thus higher rates of attrition and (ii) liability changed between parents, that is the liable mother at T0 had become the payee or was neither meant to pay or receive child support under the assessment that applied at T1 or later.

⁶³ The right to request flexible working conditions has been instrumental in mothers being able to stay in better paid employment rather than change jobs to have this flexibility once they have children (de Henau & Himmelweit 2013).

where more than one person contributed to the household income, income from all sources.⁶⁴ The final income variables represent net annual income inclusive of non-taxable payments like Family Tax Benefit⁶⁵, allowing comparisons across households. Both personal and household income were compared to determine socioeconomic status as repartnered parents with low personal incomes could have an employed partner. Of note, the personal income measure is not the same as ‘adjusted taxable income’ used in the assessment, which broadly equates to individual gross income with some deductions (such as net rental losses) added back in and any reportable fringe benefits or exempt foreign income. Further, the income variables did not take into account any child support actually paid.

To allow further comparisons on socioeconomic circumstances, and to account for household size and composition, the present study used an equivalised household income measure.⁶⁶ The measure used ABS 2007–08 median equivalised disposable income: \$36,082 plus \$18,000 for additional adults and \$10,800 for each resident child. It is somewhat rough for parents with an adult resident child⁶⁷ or a child spending some overnights in the household and ‘generous’ for parents with more than one equal-time child.⁶⁸ As comparisons could be affected if liability differed by gender, the annual amount of child support expected to be

⁶⁴ Income variables used for the present study were developed for Son, Rodgers and Smyth (2014). Income could be given before or after tax and weekly, fortnightly, monthly or annually. If gross income amounts were provided, adjustments were made for relevant taxes, levies and government payments. Respondents were prompted to include any child support received. A minority of liable parents chose not to answer or did not know, typical of questions about income with missing on personal income 4–6% and 9–10% for household income. Thus, these variables are rough measures of income.

⁶⁵ Family Tax Benefit was received by half of liable mothers and 15% of liable fathers, indicating resident children or more overnights for minority-time liable mothers and that mothers are usually the recipient in couple households.

⁶⁶ Based on a more comprehensive analysis of CSRS data by Son, Rodgers and Smyth (2014).

⁶⁷ Resident children 19–24 years were treated as adults. Former relationship children who were 25 years or older were excluded because there was no information on their living arrangements. Liable fathers who lived with other adults (not including adult children) were treated as single adult households. This decision may overestimate the equivalised annual household income for a small number of liable fathers where more than one adult contributed to the household income. (No liable mothers were in this situation.)

⁶⁸ Equal-time applied to 7% of liable mothers and 39% had three or more children.

paid was deducted from the net household income before comparisons were made.⁶⁹ Parents whose equivalised household income was below 60% of the median were identified.

Three variables measured the current circumstances of the respondent's former partner: (i) repartnered (if known) (ii) repartnered with a new/stepchild and (iii) hours and type of employment. The first measure of repartnering had two categories (yes/no) and treated 'don't know' responses as missing. As new family formation and paid employment could be related to perceptions of the 'need' for child support and willingness to pay, a 'don't know' category was retained for the other two variables. (13–16% of liable mothers and 17–20% of liable fathers were unable to answer these questions.)

Detailed information was collected about the respondent's time with the focal child when the child lived with them less than 50% of the time and about the other parent's time when the child lived with the respondent roughly 50/50 or more time. Frequency of face-to-face contact (range: 1=daily, 11=never seen parent) was not used in the analyses as only minority-time parents ($n=93/185$ liable mothers) reported on their own time. It was not possible to calculate a valid estimate of parenting time for respondents whose answer related to the other parent's time. Instead, responses from this variable, and those for daytime and overnights, were combined to develop a three-level variable that identified whether the liable parent had no time, daytime-only or some overnights in the last 12 months. A range of measures based on number of nights were also developed.

Information on other former relationship children was restricted to living arrangements. As arrangements for siblings could differ from the focal child's arrangements, an additional variable was derived to cover all former relationship children eligible for child support (here defined as 18

⁶⁹ This assumes that all liable parents paid in full. Around 10% of liable parents did not know the expected amount and were treated as missing.

years or younger).⁷⁰ The living arrangements of all former relationship children (18 years or younger) variable (hereafter ‘children’s living arrangement variable’) has four categories: ‘all mainly with the other parent’; ‘all equal-time’; ‘all mainly with the respondent’; and ‘split residence’ (that is, siblings split between parents). The latter category included shared-time children with a sibling in majority-time with either parent.

The children’s living arrangement variable is used as a proxy measure for testing the present study’s feminist theoretical framework of gendered parenting roles and the concept of ‘good’ (that is, intensive) mothering as being immersed in the ‘relational and logistic work of child rearing’ (Arendell 1999: 1). The intensity of mothering is measured by level of involvement and thus the potential responsibility to cater to the needs of their child. The variable categorises this intensity on a continuum from minority-time to majority-time with one or more children. This assumes a specific, socially constructed (and internalised) expectation of ‘good’ mothering. The choice to use a proxy measure of this concept takes into account that this conceptualisation of mothering gives less attention to diverse norms of mothering and to the intersection with race, ethnicity and sexual identity. Further, it assumes that the performance of mothering measured by actual time (that is, daily caregiving) reflects the mother’s view of her expected role. The CSRS did not specifically ask about what respondents believed a ‘good’ mother should do. No questions were asked about personal values and attitudes about parenting and role identity. Adherence to gendered expectations of mothering were inferred by answers to other questions.

The living arrangement variable is important to the following research questions: Question 1 (“What are the characteristics of mothers with a

⁷⁰ This variable was based on the age of each former relationship child who lived with either parent. Not all parents were asked which former relationship children were covered by the child support liability. Consequently, this variable may include older children who were no longer in the child support system because they were 18 years old and not in secondary school; and children where parentage had not been established or who were excluded for other reasons. Adult children (over 18 years) whose parents may still be paying or receiving child support were excluded.

child support liability in Australia?") specifically Chapter 6 where a typology of liable mothers is developed, and Question 3 ("What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?") in Chapter 9 where the relationship between parenting-time and non-compliance is tested.⁷¹ While this is the primary measurement used for this concept, other measures such as number of nights with the focal child are also used in the logistic regression modelling where applicable.

Family dynamics were measured by the relationship between the parents; how the parenting arrangements were decided; how well the arrangements are working; and the closeness of the relationship with the focal child. The quality of the relationship with their former partner was based on one question: *Which of the words I am about to read out best describe the relationship with (former partner) over the past 12 months: friendly, cooperative, distant, lots of conflict and fearful?* (If parents gave more than one response the interviewer was directed to record the most extreme response at Time 0.) 'Friendly' and 'cooperative' were classified as positive; 'distant' as neutral; and 'lots of conflict' and 'fearful' as negative. Parents who said they had no contact in the last 12 months or no contact ever were categorised as 'distant'. An additional dichotomous variable was created to indicate whether the relationship was fearful. This was done to test whether domestic violence could be a feature of the relationship, currently or in the past. The prevalence of domestic violence in the nonresident mother literature suggest this should be tested in the present study.

Two variables covered the amount of general conflict between parents (range: great deal to none) and frequency of arguments over money (range: frequently to never). These were recoded into dichotomous variables representing high and low conflict.

Two variables were chosen to measure respondent wellbeing: life satisfaction (range: 0=totally dissatisfied, 10=totally satisfied) and total

⁷¹ The number of nights the liable parent spends with the focal child is another measure that is used as a proxy for intensity of mothering.

personal wellbeing (range: 3=low, 15=high). This wellbeing measure was a composite score based on three questions about how often in the last four weeks (range: 1=all the time, 5=none of the time) they (i) felt calm and peaceful, (ii) had lots of energy and (iii) felt down. (The first two were reverse-coded to create the total score.) Questions asked about child wellbeing were not used in the present study.

The full list of socio-demographic, family dynamics and wellbeing variables used in the analyses are detailed in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Socio-demographic, family dynamics and wellbeing measures

Socio-demographic measures

Age continuous

Household composition¹

1=lived alone or shared with other adults

2=resident children and no partner

3=partnered and no resident children

4=partnered and resident children

Has resident child¹ 1=yes, 2=no

Biological children from more than one relationship²

1=former relationship children only

2=new or other previous relationship children resident in household or elsewhere

Has degree or higher qualification 1=yes, 0=no

Hours worked per week continuous

Employment³

1=not in paid employment

2=short part-time (1–20 hours a week)

3=long part-time (21–34 hours a week)

4=standard full-time (35–44 hours a week)

5=long full-time (45 hours or more)

Main income source

1=salary or wages

2=self-employment or other

3=government payment

Net annual personal income continuous

Net annual household income continuous

Equivalised annual household income (with expected child support deducted) below 60% of the median 1=yes, 0=no

Self-assessed poor financial circumstances

1=poor or very poor

2=just getting along or better

Experienced hardship in last 12 months⁴ 1=yes, 0=no

Previously married 1=yes, 2=no

Years together continuous

Number of former relationship children continuous

Years separated continuous

Former partner repartnered 1=yes, 2=no

Former partner repartnered with new/stepchild⁵

1=not living with partner

2=repartnered and no new/stepchild

3=repartnered and a new/stepchild

4=don't know

Type of employment of former partner

1=employee

2=self-employed

3=not in paid employment

4=don't know

Age of child continuous

Age group

1=0–5 years

2=6–10 years

3=11–15 years

4=16 years or older

Living arrangement of child

- 1=always or more than 50% of time with liable parent
- 2=roughly 50/50 split
- 3=less than 50% of time or never with liable parent

Living arrangement of all former relationship children (18 years or younger)

- 1=all children mainly with liable parent
- 2=all equal-time
- 3=all children mainly with other parent
- 4=split-residence

Split-residence 1=yes, 2=no**Youngest child age** continuous**Sex of former relationship children (18 years or younger)**

- 1=all boys
- 2=all girls
- 3=both sexes

Liable parent's time with child in last 12 months

- 1=no time
- 2=daytime-only
- 3=some overnights

Liable parent's overnights in last 12 months continuous**Original Scheme time categories**

- 1=minor (0–109 nights)
- 2=substantial (110–145 nights)
- 3=shared (146–219 nights)
- 4=major (220–255 nights)
- 5=sole (256–365 nights)

Liable parent has equal-time

- 1=less than 48% nights
 - 2=equal-time (48/52% nights)
 - 3=more than 52% nights
-

Family dynamics measures

Parental relationship quality in the past 12 months⁶

- 1=friendly
- 2=cooperative
- 3=distant
- 4=lots of conflict
- 5=fearful

Fearful parental relationship 1=yes, 2=no**General conflict in the last 12 months⁷**

- 1=a great deal or some
- 2= very little or none

Conflict over money in last 12 months⁸

- 1=frequently or sometimes argued
- 2=rarely or never argued or did not talk about money

Distance between parents' houses continuous**Emotionally very close to child⁹** 1=yes, 2=no**Used lawyer or mediation service** 1=yes, 2=no**Parenting arrangement decision**

- 1=mother decided
- 2=parents agreed or parents and child agreed
- 3=child decided
- 4=father decided
- 5=judge decided
- 6=other or just happened

How well arrangements are working for liable parent¹⁰

How well arrangements are working for the child

1=really or fairly well

2=not so well or not at all well

Wellbeing measures

Life satisfaction

Range: 0=totally dissatisfied, 10=totally satisfied

Personal wellbeing¹¹

Range: 3=low, 15=high

Notes: Variables referring to 'child' are based on information for the focal child.

1. 'Resident child' means in the household at least 50% of the time and includes dependent adult children. 2. 'Biological children' include adopted children but not stepchildren. 3. Employment categories based on definitions developed by Baxter, Gray, Hand & Hayes (2012). 4. 'Hardship' was measured by whether because of the shortage of money they (i) pawned or sold something, (ii) went without meals, or (iii) asked for help from welfare/community organisation. 5. This excludes (i) former partners who have repartnered but do not live with their current partner and (ii) unpartnered parents with other relationship children. 6. 'Distant' includes 'no contact with former partner in last 12 months' and 'no contact ever'. 7. 'A great deal or some' includes 'varies'. 'Very little or none' includes 'no contact in last 12 months' and 'no contact ever'. 8. 'Did not talk about money' includes 'no contact in last 12 months' and 'no contact ever'. 9. Emotional closeness was not asked if either parent never saw the child. 10. How well the parenting arrangement was working for their former partner was also asked. This was not used in the analyses as 19% of liable mothers and 27% of liable fathers did not to respond about their former partner. 11. Score based on three questions about how often in the last four weeks they (i) felt calm and peaceful, (ii) had lots of energy and (iii) felt down (1=all the time, 5=none of the time, the former two reverse coded).

4.4.2 Child support and compliance measures

As discussed in Chapter 1, most previous Australian research (pre-2008) did not clearly differentiate between non-payment where something was expected and non-payment when *nothing* was expected. Only the former is non-compliance. To disentangle these differences, questions in the CSRS survey first determined whether a payment was expected⁷², that is, a current liability of more than \$0. (Compliance data used in the present study omits respondents with an expected amount of \$0, unless specified.) A substantial minority of liable parents (12% mothers and 9% fathers) did not know the expected amount or stated that it varies. This level of unknown is consistent with other Australian research (Qu & Weston 2010) and reinforces evidence that some parents throw Child

⁷² See Section 1.2.4 for an explanation of why CSA classify parents with no current liability as a 'payer' and/or a 'payee' and Section 1.4.2 for a discussion of issues with some Australian research that does not clarify whether an amount of child support is expected.

Support Program letters in the recycling bin without reading them (Fehlberg & Millward 2013).⁷³

Parents who reported they currently paid or received child support were asked whether the payment was received on time (range: 1=always, 5=never) and what was the actual amount paid.

Those parents who stated that they did not currently pay or receive child support were asked if child support *should* be paid. It was assumed none of the liability was paid if the parent said they *should* pay or receive. If the response to this question was “no” it was assumed that nothing was expected to be paid. These parents were treated as neither a liable parent nor a payee. The distinction between parents who were *meant* to pay or receive child support and those who were not is important. The former are included in the measure of compliance and are treated as non-compliant. The latter are excluded from the analytical sample.⁷⁴

Compliance was measured as payment made in full *and* always on time. While a strict definition of compliance, this measure is used because both fullness and timeliness are important. This definition is consistent with other contemporary Australian research on compliance⁷⁵ (see Smyth, Vnuk, Rodgers and Son 2014 and research conducted by AIFS such as Kaspiew et al. 2009; Qu & Weston 2010; Qu et al. 2014; De Maio et al. 2013). This definition is also consistent with expectations of compliance under the Child Support Scheme. Under Private Collect, 100% is assumed paid.⁷⁶ Payees can request Child Support Collect if payments are not in full and regular. For Child Support Collect cases,

⁷³ Anecdotal evidence from the 2008 child support reform communication campaign indicated that letters were often ignored.

⁷⁴ This is explained in more detail in Section 4.2.

⁷⁵ While some compliance research in the US and other countries use a more ‘generous’ measure of compliance which does not include regularity and treats as compliant payment of amounts above a threshold (e.g., 90% of the expected *annual* amount paid), this is often because of the level of precision in the available administrative or survey data.

⁷⁶ Parents can come to an agreement about how this 100% of the liability is paid (e.g., weekly, fortnightly, monthly or customised such as on the liable parent’s payday or when the child is picked up) and payment can be in kind (e.g., school fees, bills paid, mowing the lawns at the payee’s home) (Child Support Agency 2006).

the monthly liability is meant to be paid by the 7th of each month.⁷⁷ DHS expect the amount due to be paid on time. A range of compliance and enforcement actions can be taken where this is not happening. Late payments are automatically flagged from the first default (Child Support Agency 2008).

Determination of compliance required up to three pieces of information (expected amount, actual amount and regularity). Parents were excluded if they had missing data on: (i) all relevant variables; (ii) regularity but payment was in full; or (iii) expected and/or actual payment but payment was always on time. In addition, parents with another arrangement in lieu of cash child support were treated as missing.

Non-compliance was defined as not in full and/or not on time. Parents were 'non-compliant' if they (i) paid less than the liability and/or paid mostly to never on time or (ii) said they should pay including those who did not know the assessed amount or it varies; (iii) had missing data on expected and/or actual and paid mostly to never on time.

To further understand the extent of financial support provided, parents who reported that they currently paid or received child support were asked additional questions about (i) specified in-kind contributions prescribed under the regulations and (ii) anything else such as clothing, computer, mobile phone costs, hobbies or sports equipment.⁷⁸ For parents with Child Support Collect in-kind contributions are credited in full where the payee agrees and for prescribed payments for up to 30% of the liability without agreement when the remaining 70% is paid. Parents were asked if any prescribed items were partly or fully in lieu of child support; and whether agreed.

⁷⁷ A different monthly pay-date can be negotiated to align with wages/salary payments (Child Support Agency 2006).

⁷⁸ Questions about in-kind contributions were restricted to respondents who answered "yes" to the first child support screening question: *Do you currently pay any child support to, or receive any child support from (partner)?* This excluded 18% of liable mothers ($n=34/185$), 6% of liable fathers ($n=96/1,692$), 13% of payee mothers ($n=299/2,296$) and 24% of payee fathers ($n=50/208$). Responses from other survey questions suggest in-kind contributions were also common among liable mothers and payee fathers who were not asked these questions.

The child support, in-kind, and compliance variables used in the analyses are listed in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 Child support measures

Concept	Measure
Child support	<p>How liability determined 1=administrative assessment 2=private agreement 3=registered agreement 4=other</p> <p>Administrative assessment 1=yes, 2=no</p> <p>Collection method 1=Child Support Collect 2=Private Collect</p> <p>Previously Child Support Collect (if Private Collect) 1=yes, 2=no</p> <p>Previously Private Collect (if Child Support Collect) 1=yes, 2=no</p> <p>Expected annual amount of child support continuous</p> <p>Expected annual amount of child support 1=\$0 2=\$1–339 (minimum liability) 3=\$340–999 4=\$1,000–1,999 5=\$2,000–2,999 6=\$3,000–3,999 7=\$4,000–4,999 8=\$5,000–5,999 9=\$6,000–6,999 10=\$7,000–7,999 11=\$8,000–8,999 12=\$9,000–9,999 13=\$10,000–10,999 14=\$11,000–11,999 15=\$12,000 or more</p> <p>Paid none of the liability 1=yes, 2=no</p> <p>Actual amount paid continuous</p> <p>Percentage paid 1=less than 100% 2=exactly 100% 3=more than 100%</p> <p>Paid in full 1=yes, 2=no</p> <p>Paid on time 1=always 2=mostly 3=sometimes 4=rarely 5=never</p> <p>Always paid on time 1=yes, 2=no</p> <p>Ever paid regularly 1=yes, 2=no</p>

Compliance	Compliance 1=compliant 2=non-compliant Compliance types 1=in full and on time 2=in full and not on time 3=on time and not in full 4=neither in full nor on time Neither in full nor on time 1=yes, 2=no
In-kind contributions	Liabe parent made an in-kind payment for a prescribed item 1=yes, 2=no Amount paid continuous Partly or fully in lieu of child support 1=yes, 2=no Other parent agreed to payment 1=yes, 2=no Paid for childcare 1=yes, 2=no Paid for preschool or school fees 1=yes, 2=no Paid for school uniform or books 1=yes, 2=no Paid for essential medical or dental 1=yes, 2=no Paid for payee's share of mortgage, rent or utilities 1=yes, 2=no Paid for payee's motor vehicle expenses 1=yes, 2=no Anything else paid in-kind by liable parent¹ 1=yes, 2=no Amount paid continuous Other parent agreed to payment 1=yes, 2=no Liabe parent made any in-kind contribution 1=something in-kind 2=nothing in-kind
Satisfaction and fairness of child support amount	Satisfied with the amount payable Range: 0=totally dissatisfied, 10=totally satisfied Fairness of child support for: child liable parent payee current partner Range: 0=totally unfair, 10=totally fair Overall fairness² Range 0=totally unfair for all, 30=totally fair for all

Notes: Parents who said they should pay or should receive or had another arrangement were not asked about actual amount, regularity and in-kind contributions. 1. 'Anything else' means items not on the prescribed payment list, for example, mobile phones, clothes or computer. 2. Total of fair for child, respondent and former partner where valid information for all three questions.

4.5 Preliminary technical notes

4.5.1 *Using quantitative research to explore gender*

The present study involves secondary analysis of survey data using a feminist theoretical framework as detailed in Section 1.5. Although a feminist theoretical framework (or ‘gender lens’) is predominantly associated with qualitative work, quantitative research has equal validity for exploring gender (Allen & Baber 1992; Chafetz 2004; Gringeri, Wahab & Anderson-Nathe 2010; Thompson, L 1992). As Risman (1993: 20) points out, any methodological technique can incorporate a feminist perspective:

The important feminist issues that guide our research involve the context of discovery....Can it be used to further gender equity?...If...we ask questions that matter to women's lives, we are...framing research within a feminist vision.

As other feminist researchers have stated, ‘concern with systematic disadvantages lends itself to quantitative research, which relies on statistical methods to create abstract, simplified representations of ...systems and institutions in order to allow for clearer inferences’ (Stauffer & O'Brien 2017). Quantitative methodology can ‘carefully conceptualise these experiences within wider social structures’ (Metso & Le Feuvre 2007: 14).

One of the strengths of quantitative research for policy analysis is that ‘it allows the understanding of patterns’ (Burkinshaw 2013: 237) and sometimes this provide a more compelling driver for social change than personal stories (Sprague & Zimmerman 1993). Feminist-informed quantitative research is important when the focus of the research question relates to prevalence such as domestic violence, or to structural differences by gender for example time use by mothers and fathers or the comparative worth of work (Metso & Le Feuvre 2007).

There is a strong tradition in Australia of using survey data to investigate gender and post-separation finances, leading to policy and law reform. Research on the economic circumstances of women and children after separation (McDonald 1986) provided evidence to support the introduction of the Scheme and to monitor its coverage and impact (see

also, Funder, Harrison & Weston 1993; Harrison, Snider & Merlo 1990; Harrison et al. 1991). Later research on spousal violence and property division (Sheehan & Smyth 2000), and superannuation and property (Dewar, Sheehan & Hughes 1999), informed family law reform.

4.5.2 ***‘Minority-time’ or ‘liable’ mothers***

The Scheme caseload currently provides the best and most comprehensive sampling frame of separated mothers with a child support liability. An estimated 6–15% of separated parents have no involvement with the Child Support Program (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs 2003; Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support 2005). This group comprises (i) parents who have no arrangements for reasons such as not wanting any child support or to avoid conflict or violence⁷⁹ and (ii) parents who have incomes above the threshold for FTB, get along and have a private arrangement for child support (hereafter ‘self-administer’). Parents with no arrangement are not relevant to the current study.

The small group who self-administer is hard to quantify⁸⁰ or identify to include in research. Thus, while some minority-time mothers might privately pay child support to fathers, legal restrictions on formal arrangements outside the Scheme mean informal transfers are not necessary to understand compliance. Any parent with at least 30% of nights (35% from July 2008) can apply for an administrative assessment. This means the caseload is inclusive of fathers who *want* to receive child support. Because the focus of the present study is on compliance with a child support liability, and registration with the CSA is required for an

⁷⁹ Some low-income parents forgo the additional FTB payable and may be unaware that they can apply for an exemption because of domestic violence, or do not to pursue this for a range of reasons.

⁸⁰ No reliable research is available to determine what proportion of the estimated 6–15% have a private working arrangement for child support and how many of these are mothers paying fathers. Some research (Qu & Weston 2013) based on two cohorts of children aged 6–7 years and 10–11 years (almost all with a majority-time mother) showed that the self-administered group comprised mainly fathers paying mothers and was much smaller than the group with no arrangements. Unpublished ABS data (Qu & Weston 2007) collected in 2003 estimated this group to be 10,200 out of 669,600 separated families with children 18 years or younger.

administrative assessment to be made (or an agreement registered), a sample that represents the CSA caseload is appropriate.

The focus of the present study is on financial responsibility not parenting time. It is not intended to represent all minority-time mothers and intentionally excludes mothers not in the caseload and those with no current liability. Rather, it reflects the range of parenting arrangements where money *should* be transferred between parents, that is split-residence, shared-time, and majority-time where the mother has the net liability⁸¹ and minority-time arrangements. (It represents payee *parents* in the caseload as nonparent carer payees were excluded from the CSRS.)

4.6 **Limitations**

Two methodological limitations of secondary data analysis warrant mention. The first relates to the theoretical approach; the other, to the size of the groups of interest.

4.6.1 ***Intersectionality***

Gender ‘must be understood within the context of intersecting domains of inequality’ (Risman 2004: 442): race, ethnicity, class and sexual identity. It should not be assumed that meanings ascribed to financial support for children in separated families is the same across cultures or classes. There are some restrictions on taking an intersectional approach using CSRS data.

First, data were not collected on Indigenous identification or cultural connections.⁸² The exclusion of identifying questions was made on solid methodological grounds as small numbers would preclude meaningful analysis. Larger studies have identified high representation of Indigenous mothers and mothers born overseas with a child living elsewhere (Kaspiew et al. 2009), the former confirmed by Indigenous-specific

⁸¹ This includes four liable mothers with another arrangement who reported no payment was expected. These arrangements involved payment of school fees or specific bills, or each parent covered expenses when the child was with them.

⁸² If a respondent was not comfortable with English the interview was terminated.

datasets (Walter & Hewitt 2012). Indigenous families remain under-represented in the Scheme caseload (Esler, Robertson & Shipley 2010). Norms of financial obligations and parenting in Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities such as concepts of kinship rather than solely biological parental responsibility (Moore & Riley 2010) diverge from the dominant culture in Australia reflected in this thesis.

Second, socioeconomic status is measured by education, hours of employment and net annual household income.

Third, the Scheme was not extended to same-sex families until 1 July 2009. Separated parents with children from former opposite-sex relationships in later same-sex relationships were not identified.⁸³

4.6.2 ***Small sample sizes***

CSRS is large dataset weighted to be generalisable to the active CSA caseload for parents who previously lived together. However, liable mothers are a small subgroup of liable parents compared with liable fathers ($n=185$ and $n=1,692$).

Using large surveys for secondary analysis of subgroups has limitations. One identified by Ahrons (2011: 231) is ‘the slippery slope of shrinking *ns*’. As observed in the preceding literature review chapters, analyses of survey data with parents in atypical roles often involve fewer than 150 respondents (for example, Gunnoe 1993; Kitterod & Lyngstad 2011; Maccoby et al. 1992; Manning & Smock 2000).

Cheng and Powell (2005) highlight that a potential problem with subgroup studies is underestimation of real effects due to a lack of statistical power where potentially significant findings are missed because of small sample size (technically termed, Type II error). One option to deal with lack of statistical power suggested by Cheng and Powell is to use a larger *p*-value to test the null hypothesis, which increases Type I error. While the present study reports findings at the

⁸³ Again, this subgroup would have been too small for analysis.

standard significance level of $p < .05$, findings approaching significance (between $p = .05$ and $p < .10$) are noted. This approach is particularly relevant to the two chapters that focus solely on liable mothers: Chapter 6 where a liable mother typology is discussed and Chapter 9 where the analyses relate to the smaller number of liable mothers with compliance information ($n = 146$) and odds of non-compliance across a range of variables. These two chapters have some small subgroups of liable mothers.

Nonetheless, relationships could still be missed because of unequal sample sizes. Other options to increase the sample size are not possible. Because of small numbers in some subgroups, differences that appear meaningful but are not statistically significant (such as relationships in the opposite direction to that found in research with liable fathers) are noted. This is primarily relevant to Chapter 9 and the logistic regression modelling of reasons for non-compliance for liable mothers.

The next five chapters—the results chapters—address the present study's three research questions in detail.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on Question 1: *“What are the characteristics of mothers with a child support liability in Australia and what are the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers?”* Chapter 5 first explores the liability rates of mothers and fathers at different parenting-time arrangements with the focal child. Second, liable mothers and liable fathers are compared on socio-demographic, family dynamics and wellbeing measures. The remainder of the chapter identifies the key differences between liable parents and discusses these differences using a gender lens. Chapter 6 describes a typology of liable mothers developed for the present study. This typology is based on a feminist theoretical framework of gendered parenting roles and the concept of ‘good’ (that is, intensive) mothering, categorised liable mothers into four groups based on the living arrangements of all former relationship children (18 years or under).

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on Question 2: “*Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?*” Chapter 7 establishes what payments are expected to be made by liable mothers and liable fathers and addresses whether liable mothers pay when they should in full and on time. Chapter 8 focuses on whether liable parents provide anything in-kind as an addition to, or as a substitute for, child. These two chapters answers this question using (i) reports from liable parents; and (ii) matched reports from a subgroup of ex-partner dyads from the same child support case.

Chapter 9 focuses on Question 3: “*What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?*” This chapter provides a brief overview of the compliance literature—mainly involving liable fathers and/or payee mothers—and then details the odds of non-compliance for liable mothers testing a range of factors that the literature suggests might be relevant. The chapter concludes with a model identifying the key factors associated with non-compliance for liable mothers. In particular, this chapter examined whether mothers have a distinct pattern of non-compliance associated with factors relevant to their mothering role as hypothesised in Chapter 1.

Chapter 5 What are the characteristics of mothers with a child support liability in Australia?

This chapter addresses the first research question: “What are the characteristics of mothers with a child support liability in Australia and what are the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers?” It does so by examining the key differences between liable parents. The chapter is structured as follows. First, liability status of all mothers and fathers is detailed. This section (Section 5.1) details the liability status of all mothers and fathers by nights with the focal child based on the original Scheme time categories using the whole CSRS sample of 5,046 parents. Second, liable mothers and liable fathers are compared on a range of socio-demographic, family dynamics and wellbeing measures. This section (Section 5.2) focuses on the analytic sample of liable parents. Differences between each group are summarised in tabular form. Third, the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers are identified using logistic regression modelling (Section 5.3). Fourth, these key differences are discussed in the context of previous research findings (Section 5.4).

5.1 Child support liability

This section details the liability status for mothers and fathers based on overnights with one randomly chosen former relationship child. The parenting-time categories used for the focal child are those that applied under the original Child Support Scheme (see Table 1.2). To recap, these are sole (256–365 nights); major (220–255 nights); shared (146–219 nights); substantial (110–145 nights); and minor⁸⁴ (0–109 nights). Table 5.1 details the liability status by amount of parenting-time. Each row represents a parenting-time category based on the respondent’s reports of their time with the focal child and indicates the percentage frequency of respondents by liability status, i.e., liable parent, payee or neither. The top panels of the table show mothers’ reports. The bottom panels of the table show fathers’ reports. This section is descriptive: no statistical tests

⁸⁴ ‘Minor’ is not defined in the *Child Support (Assessment) Act 1989*. It was a commonly used term for parenting-time where the payee/other parent had ‘sole’ time.

were applied to this data. This is the only section that uses the whole CSRS sample ($n=4,883/5046$ with valid information).

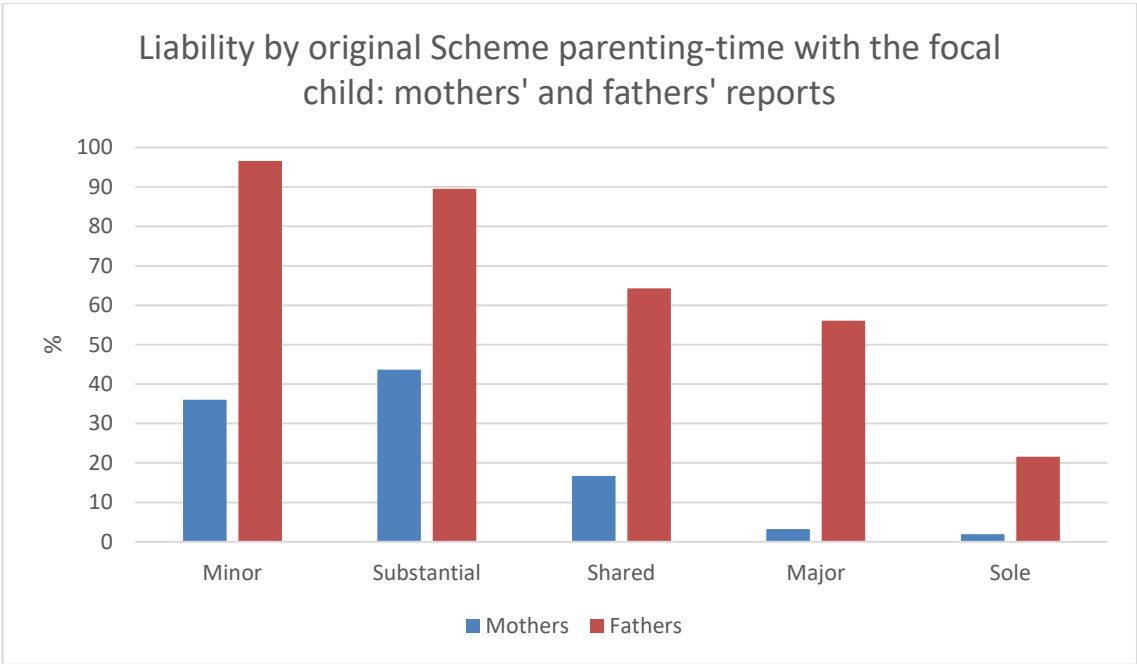
Table 5.1 Mothers’ and fathers’ reports of overnights with the focal child and whether they are the liable parent, the payee or neither

Mothers’ reports <i>n</i> =2,708					
Mothers’ time with focal child	Mother liable (%)	Mother payee (%)	Mother neither (%)	Total (%)	Total (n)
Mother minor & father sole	36.0	31.9	29.1	100.0	<i>n</i> =121
Mother substantial & father major	43.7	50.5	5.8	100.0	<i>n</i> =26
Shared	16.7	60.6	22.7	100.0	<i>n</i> =469
Mother major & father substantial	3.2	85.6	11.2	100.0	<i>n</i> =198
Mother sole & father minor	1.9	93.2	4.9	100.0	<i>n</i> =1,894
Fathers’ reports <i>n</i> =2,175					
	Father liable (%)	Father payee (%)	Father neither (%)	Total (%)	Total (n)
Father minor & mother sole	96.6	0.5	2.9	100.00	<i>n</i> =1,086
Father substantial & mother major	89.5	1.4	9.2	100.0	<i>n</i> =216
Shared	64.3	7.6	28.2	100.0	<i>n</i> =627
Father major & mother substantial	56.1	29.6	14.3	100.0	<i>n</i> =19
Father sole & mother minor	21.6	49.3	29.1	100.0	<i>n</i> =227

Notes: Data are weighted. Overnights with the focal child may not reflect arrangements for all former relationship children (aged 18 years or younger) where split-residence applied. Responses from 2,620 mothers. Excludes 61 mothers with inconsistent information, 33 who did not know if they should pay or receive and 96 who had missing information on overnights. Responses from 2,088 fathers. Excludes 94 fathers with inconsistent information, 40 who did not know if they should pay or receive, 54 who had missing information on overnights and two fathers who were a former couple.

Figure 5.1 shows the proportion of mothers and fathers with a specified amount of time (i.e., minor, substantial, major and sole) who are the liable parent in their child support case, as detailed in Table 5.1 column 2. In other words, Figure 5.1 displays the comparison of the liability rates

of mothers and fathers at each level of parenting-time (based on the original Scheme categories) in graphic form.



Note: Data are weighted. Data are based on 179 liable mothers and 1,656 liable fathers who had valid information on the number of overnights with the focal child.

Figure 5-1 Mothers’ and fathers’ reports of their overnights with the focal child: percentage liable

5.1.1 Mothers’ and fathers’ reports of their overnights with the focal child and liability

Whether a parent was liable, a payee, or neither differed by gender and number of nights with the focal child. Figure 5.1 shows that 97% of fathers were liable when they had minor time and 90% when they had substantial time. In contrast, 36% of mothers were liable when they had minor time and 44% when they had substantial time. It would be expected that the majority of mothers with minor time would be liable as was the case with fathers with minor time. While mothers with minor time were more often a payee or neither than the liable parent seems counter-intuitive, this lower rate could denote split-residence.⁸⁵

Further, as Table 5.1 indicates, when fathers had sole time, 49% were payees; higher than reported by liable mothers with minor time. Two reasons might explain this discrepancy: (i) parents with this arrangement

⁸⁵ Parents who reported being neither a liable parent nor a payee could have a current liability that was offset by arrears due by the other parent.

were independent samples of mothers and fathers (that is, not ex-couples) and each sample reflected different populations of parents and/or (ii) respondents reported more nights than their former partner thereby placing them in different time categories. Again, split-residence could explain why 22% of fathers were liable when they had sole-time with this child.

Differing rates of liability for mothers and fathers with similar amounts of time found here are consistent with recent research (Kaspiew et al. 2009), and as other research suggests (see, for example, Qu & Weston 2008), mothers' lower rates could indicate a resident child.

5.2 Comparative analysis: liable mothers and liable fathers

In this section liable parents are compared on a range of socio-demographic, family dynamics and wellbeing measures. As there is little previous research in this area, variables chosen for the comparisons were those that intuitively could be important and relate to the theoretical framework, that is, gender, and the first research question seeking to identify the characteristics of liable mothers and the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers. Differences are expected to be associated with differences in gender norms of parenting for mothers and fathers. The results are generalisable to the active caseload for parents who previously lived together.

5.2.1 *Analytic sample and related notes*

Between-group differences are based on an analytic sample of 185 liable mothers and 1,692 liable fathers. This section reports on independent samples of mothers and fathers not former couples. The selection criteria into groups (see Section 4.2) meant that ex-couples where both parents reported being liable (or both payees) were omitted from the analytic sample.

The bivariate analyses in this section use cross-tabulation for categorical variables and comparison of means for continuous variables to identify similarities and differences between liable mothers and liable fathers.

These simple bivariate techniques were chosen because they provide information on the relationship between variables.

As the data are weighted to take into account the complex survey design, the relationship between variables cannot be tested by the Pearson chi-squared test (categorical variables) nor the t-test (continuous variables) as 'estimates may be biased for the true proportion of the survey population' (Heeringa, West & Berglund 2010:151). Instead, tabulations are performed using the *svy: tab* command, and means⁸⁶ are determined using the *svy: mean* command. Comparisons are restricted to the subpopulation of liable parents using the *subpop* option in Stata.⁸⁷ The former process produces an F-transformed Rao-Scott chi-squared test statistic as a default (Heeringa, West & Berglund 2010: 167)⁸⁸ to take account of the complex survey data. The latter process produces linearised standard errors and 95% confidence intervals of the mean. The *test* command run post-estimation produces an adjusted Wald Test and an F-Ratio to show whether the means are statistically equivalent or not (UCLA Statistical Consulting Group n.d.). Exact *p*-values are reported in the text and tables.⁸⁹ Significant differences at $p < .05$ are noted. All data are weighted using the design and response weights developed to be representative of the Scheme active caseload. Numbers reported in the text and tables are unweighted.

Variables that differ significantly between liable parents in the bivariate analyses are further investigated via multivariate techniques (specifically binary logistic regression) later in this chapter to determine the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers. In addition, group

⁸⁶ While medians are mentioned where appropriate, the complex survey design limits the validity of statistical testing of differences in medians between liable mothers and liable fathers.

⁸⁷ This required the creation of a variable to represent the subpopulation of interest, here liable parents. Liable parents were coded 1 and all respondents outside this group were coded 0. A similar process was used for specific subpopulation analyses in the other results chapters: the subpopulation of payees; liable mothers; and all liable parents and payees.

⁸⁸ This is a design-adjusted form of the Pearson Chi-Squared Test with a second-order design correction incorporated.

⁸⁹ *P*-values below .001 are reported as $p < .001$.

level comparisons may mask differences within the liable mother group. Intragroup differences are explored in Chapter 6.

5.2.2 **Household composition**

The socio-demography of liable parents covers their current household and socioeconomic circumstances; two areas where previous research would suggest that differences exist.

Household composition differed significantly by gender: 51% of liable fathers lived alone or shared with other adults compared with 20% of liable mothers. In contrast, a third of liable mothers had resident children but no partner in their household. Regardless of whether repartnered, mothers were significantly more likely to have resident children (57% compared with 32% of fathers, $p<.001$).

Table 5.2 Liable parents: current circumstances

	Liable mothers <i>n</i>=185	Liable fathers <i>n</i>=1,695
Household composition (%)		
Lived alone or shared with other adults	20.2	50.6
Lived with resident children and no partner	33.3	13.0
Lived with a partner and no resident children	22.3	17.6
Lived with a partner and resident children	24.1	18.8
Total	100.0	100.0
$p<.001$		
Has a resident child (%)	57.4	31.8
$p<.001$		
Biological children from more than one relationship (%)	20.1	19.2
$p=.859$		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. ‘Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. ‘Resident children’ means in the household at least 50% of the time and includes dependent adult children. Parents categorised as having no resident children could have 1–49% nights with one or more children. ‘Biological children’ includes legally adopted children but not stepchildren.

Differences shown in Table 5.2 reflect arrangements for former relationship children (that is, shared-time or split-residence) rather than

other relationship children. A comparison of minority-time liable parents indicates little difference in households with resident children.

Nevertheless, a minority of parents had a child from another relationship in their household or living elsewhere. Liable parents had similar rates of other relationship children (19–20%). Some repartnered parents had stepchildren in their household or living elsewhere who stayed overnight (12–17%), illustrating the complexity of relationship ties within and between households.⁹⁰

These results are consistent with previous Australian research (Kaspiew et al. 2009; Weston 2008; Wolffs & Shallcross 2000) finding high repartnering and resident children among liable mothers.

5.2.2.1 *Socioeconomic status*

Socioeconomic status was measured by education, employment and income. Highest education level did not differ significantly: 13–17% of liable parents had a degree or higher qualification. A substantial minority of liable parents (29% mothers and 20% fathers) were not in paid employment. Liable mothers worked fewer hours per week (mean=26.4 hours compared with 37.1 hours for fathers, $p<.001$).

To further explore gendered differences in employment a five-category variable is used (see Section 4.4.1). As indicated in Table 5.3, liable mothers were significantly more likely to work short and long part-time hours and liable fathers to work long full-time hours with employment patterns signalling responsibility for children. Mothers who worked part-time were twice as often in long rather than short part-time hours.

⁹⁰ Biological and legally adopted children are considered in the assessment while stepchildren are generally excluded. Liable fathers more often had resident stepchildren than liable mothers (12% compared with 2%).

**Table 5.3 Liable parents:
socioeconomic circumstances**

	Liable mothers <i>n</i>=185	Liable fathers <i>n</i>=1,692
Has degree or higher qualification (%)	16.7	13.1
<i>p</i> =.326		
Hours of work per week (mean)	26.37	37.06
SE, CI	2.45, CI 21.56–31.17	1.21, CI 34.69–39.44
<i>p</i> <.001		
Employment (%)		
Not in paid employment	28.6	19.7
Short part-time (1–20 hours)	5.1	1.9
Long part-time (21–34 hours)	11.8	6.2
Standard full-time-(35–44 hours)	44.4	33.4
Long full-time (45 hours or more)	10.1	38.8
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> <.001		
Main income source (%)		
Salary or wages	68.2	67.0
Self-employment or other	9.0	18.7
Government payment	22.8	14.3
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.063		
Net annual personal income (mean)	\$37,688.17	\$39,900.50
SE, CI	\$2,609.03, CI \$32,573.33–\$42,803.00	\$989.33, CI \$37,960.98–\$41,840.02
<i>p</i> =.428		
Net annual household income (mean)	\$52,735.91	\$50,635.91
SE, CI	\$3,793.34, CI \$45,298.62–\$60,171.82	\$1,076.34, CI \$48,525.81–\$52,746.01
<i>p</i> =.595		
Equivalised household income (with expected child support deducted) below 60% of the median (%)	20.2	22.7
<i>p</i> =.620		
Self-assessed poor financial circumstances (%)	11.2	21.5

	Liabile mothers <i>n</i> =185	Liabile fathers <i>n</i> =1,692
<i>p</i> =.009		
Experienced hardship in last 12 months (%)	33.8	34.1
<i>p</i> =.966		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. Employment categories based on definitions developed by Baxter, Gray, Hand & Hayes (2012). Net annual income variables developed for Son et al. (2014).

Main income source reflected gendered employment patterns. While salary and wages predominated, liable fathers were twice as likely as mothers to identify self-employment. By contrast, mothers had higher rates of government payments than fathers (self-employment: 19% fathers compared with 9% mothers and government payment: 23% mothers compared with 14% fathers, *p*=.063). Gender and household composition influenced the type of government payment received by liable parents (*n*=21 mothers and *n*=116 fathers). While both had high rates of Disability Support Pension (49% and 35%), Parenting Payment was more common for mothers (27% compared with 7% fathers, data not shown).

Liabile parents had similar mean net personal incomes (\$37,688 mothers and \$39,901 fathers, *p*=.428) and mean net household incomes (\$52,736 mothers and \$50,636 fathers, *p*=.595). Medians were slightly lower: personal income mothers and fathers \$36,444 and household income \$46, 649 mothers and \$43,900 fathers. As household size may differ, liable parents were also compared using equivalised household income (see Section 4.4.1). This measure considered child support liability by deducting this from income. Liable parents had similar low financial resources: 28–30% had incomes below 60% of the median for their household size.⁹¹

In contrast, liable parents did differ on self-assessed financial circumstances. While the majority reported they were ‘just getting along’ or better, mothers were half as likely to say they were ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ (11% compared with 22% fathers, *p*=.009). This significant difference in

⁹¹ See Section 4.4.1 for how this measure was calculated.

subjective financial wellbeing was not found for actual disadvantage with 34% of liable parents reporting at least one measure of hardship in the previous 12 months ($p=.966$).⁹²

5.2.2.2 *Former relationship*

As Table 5.4 reveals, liable parents had similar rates of being previously married to their former partner (67% mothers and 71% fathers), years together (mean=11 years mothers and 9.8 years fathers), and number of children (mean=2.3 mothers and 2.0 fathers). Mothers had been separated significantly longer (mean=7.8 years compared with 6.0 years fathers, $p=.001$) with 40% of mothers separated more than 10 years compared with 19% of fathers (data not shown).

Whether their former partner was living with a partner and, for those repartnered, had a new or stepchild did not differ significantly. In contrast, gender differences were again noted for employment type: 26% of mothers reported a self-employed former partner (compared with 5% fathers, $p<.001$).

⁹² 'Hardship' was measured by whether because of the shortage of money in the last 12 months they (i) pawned or sold something, (ii) went without meals, or (iii) asked for help from welfare/community organisation.

Table 5.4 Liable parents: former relationship

	Liable mothers n=185	Liable fathers n=1,692
Previously married (%)	67.3	71.0
<i>p</i> =.519		
Years together (mean)	10.98	9.84
SE, CI	0.71, CI 9.59–12.37	0.27, CI 9.32–10.36
<i>p</i> =.133		
Number of former relationship children (mean)	2.26	2.00
SE, CI	0.21, CI 1.85–2.68	0.05, CI 1.91–2.10
<i>p</i> =.236		
Years separated (mean)	7.84	5.98
SE, CI	0.53, CI 6.80–8.87	0.20, CI 5.58–6.38
<i>p</i> <.001		
Former partner repartnered (%)	44.0	48.9
<i>p</i> =.510		
Former partner repartnered with a new/stepchild (%)		
Not living with partner	46.9	40.5
Repartnered and no new/stepchild	12.5	16.2
Repartnered and a new/stepchild	23.8	19.9
Don't know	16.8	23.4
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.582		
Type of employment of former partner (%)	84.1	72.8
Employee	45.6	52.8
Self-employed	26.3	4.6
Not in workforce	13.9	22.6
Don't know	14.2	20.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> <.001		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. The question about a new/stepchild was only asked if their former partner had repartnered. This could undercount parents with a resident child from another relationship and not repartnered.

5.2.2.3 Former relationship children

Details of the age and living arrangements of the focal child are shown at Table 5.5. Mothers were predominantly liable for older children (mean=12.7 years compared with 10.3 years for fathers, *p*<.001): 74% of focal children were 11 years or older compared with 50% for fathers. The youngest former relationship child was also older (mean=11.9 years compared with 9.2 years for fathers, *p*<.001, see Table 5.6).

Table 5.5 Liable parents: focal child age and living arrangements

	Liable mothers n=185	Liable fathers n=1,692
Age of child (%)		
0–5 years	9.2	15.6
6–10 years	17.1	34.8
11–15 years	44.1	38.4
16 years or older	29.6	11.2
Total	100.0	100.0
$p \leq .001$		
Age of child (years) (mean)	12.72	10.26
SE, CI	0.55, CI 11.64–13.80	0.19, CI 9.89–10.62
$p < .001$		
Child lives with liable parent (%)		
All the time or more than 50% of the time	22.2	3.4
Roughly 50/50 split	12.9	7.2
Less than 50% of the time or never	64.9	89.5
Total	100.0	100.0
$p < .001$		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding.

Data from *CSA Facts and Figures* (Section 1.2.5) indicate that in 89% of cases the liable parent had minor time. While accurate for liable fathers, as detailed in the table above, liable mothers demonstrated a different pattern: 22% lived with the focal child more than 50% of the time (compared with 3% of fathers, $p < .001$). Another 13% lived roughly half the time with the focal child, almost twice the rate for fathers, and 10% never lived with this child compared with 17% of fathers.

The parenting arrangements for the focal child should generally represent all former relationship children because focal children were chosen randomly. However, as detailed in Table 5.6, siblings could have different arrangements, for example, one child lives mainly with their mother and a sibling lives mainly with their father.

Table 5.6 Liable parents: parenting arrangements of all former relationship children (18 years or younger)

	Liable mothers n=185	Liable fathers n=1,692
All former relationship children (%)		
Mainly with other parent	54.2	83.9
Equal-time	10.9	6.0
Mainly with liable parent	10.6	1.0
Split-residence	24.3	9.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> <.001		
Sex of former relationship children (%)		
All boys	32.4	27.9
All girls	26.7	30.2
Both sexes	40.9	41.9
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.747		
Age of youngest child (mean)		
	11.91	9.19
SE, CI	0.58, CI 10.78–13.04	0.18, CI 8.84–9.54
<i>p</i> <.001		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. Excludes children under 18 years who did not live with either parent.

Based on information for all former relationship children (18 years or younger)⁹³, 84% of liable fathers had less than 50% of the time (or never spent time) with all their children, 6% had equal-time, and 9% split-residence. In contrast, 24% of liable mothers had split-residence and 11% equal-time. Reflecting that under the original Scheme parents with more time (up to 69.9% of nights) can be liable in Australia—a circumstance not common elsewhere—11% of liable mothers had 50% or more time or always lived with all their children (compared with 1% of fathers). Again, these differences were statistically significant (*p*<.001).

Liable mothers had a significantly higher rate of split-residence: 24% of liable mother cases had differing living arrangements for siblings

⁹³ Parenting arrangements shown at Table 5.6 represent liable parents. Some shared-time or split-residence cases had no current liability: 6% of all parents in the CSRS reported they were neither meant to pay or receive child support.

(compared with 9% of fathers, $p=.002$)⁹⁴ reflecting the generally older age of the children in liable mother cases. When all the children in the case were considered, it became apparent that 46% of liable mothers had at least one child in majority or shared-time, compared with 16% of liable fathers.

5.2.2.4 *Overnights with the focal child*

Liable parents differed on all measures of parenting time. Sixteen per cent of fathers had not seen the focal child in the last 12 months, and 7% had daytime-only contact (compared with 3% and 15% of mothers, $p=.014$). This difference is consistent with the literature reported in Chapters 2 and 3 showing minority-time mothers were less likely to have no overnights (or daytime-only) than minority-time fathers.

Consequently, liable mothers had double the overnights of liable fathers (mean=135 nights compared with 64 nights, $p=.002$). Median nights were 81 for mothers and 52 for fathers. Table 5.7 shows overnights with the focal child using the original Scheme categories. More mothers had shared, major and sole time than fathers. Table 5.7 also details another parenting-time measure (equal-time). This shows that 27% of liable mothers had the majority of nights and 10% equal-time (48–52% nights). In contrast, 9% of liable fathers had equal or more nights ($p<.001$).

⁹⁴ Some liable parents had young adult children living with them, generally those who had ‘aged out’ of the assessment. This could signal a (now) minority-time liable mother who was previously a payee.

Table 5.7 Liable parents: time with focal child

	Liable mothers n=179	Liable fathers n=1,656
Time with liable parent in last 12 months (%)		
Did not see child	2.8	16.4
Daytime-only	14.5	6.8
Some overnights	82.7	76.8
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.014		
Overnights in last 12 months (mean)	134.74	63.73
SE, CI	23.16, CI 89.35–180.14	2.76, CI 58.32–69.13
<i>p</i> =.002		
Original Scheme time categories (%)		
Minor (0–109 nights)	57.1	82.0
Substantial (110–145 nights)	3.8	5.6
Shared (146–219 nights)	15.6	9.8
Major (220–255 nights)	1.4	0.2
Sole (256–365 nights)	22.1	2.5
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> <.001		
Liable parent has equal-time (%)		
Less than 48% nights	63.1	91.4
Equal-time (48–52% nights)	9.8	5.3
More than 52% nights	27.1	3.4
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> <.001		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Details of nights for the focal child were missing for 6 liable mothers and 36 liable fathers.

5.2.3 *Family dynamics*

This section looks at family dynamics and covers the parental relationship, conflict, emotional closeness to the focal child and workability of the parenting arrangements.

5.2.3.1 *Parental relationship quality*

As indicated in Table 5.8, parental relationship quality in the last 12 months differed significantly. Fathers were more likely to report a positive relationship than liable mothers (47% friendly or cooperative compared with 36% of mothers) while more liable mothers had a negative relationship (38% compared with 24%, *p*=.046). Further, liable mothers

were significantly more likely to report a fearful relationship than liable fathers (18% compared with 6%, $p=.002$).

Table 5.8 Liable parents: family dynamics

	Liable mothers <i>n</i>=184	Liable fathers <i>n</i>=1,681
Parental relationship quality in the last 12 months (%)		
Friendly	15.4	18.8
Cooperative	21.1	28.2
Distant	25.5	29.2
Lots of conflict	20.2	17.4
Fearful	17.7	6.4
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.046		
Relationship is fearful (%)		
Yes	17.7	6.4
No	82.3	93.7
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.002		
General conflict in the last 12 months (%)		
Great deal or some	43.8	44.6
Very little or none	56.2	55.4
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.901		
Conflict over money in last 12 months (%)		
Frequently or sometimes	28.2	31.1
Rarely or never or did not talk about money	71.8	68.9
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.637		
Distance between parents' houses (mean)		
SE, CI	374.52 km 122.83, CI 133.73–615.32	377.67 km 57.27, CI 265.40–489.95
<i>p</i> =.981		
Liable parent emotionally very close to child (%)		
	63.4	55.6
<i>p</i> =.281		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. 'Distant' includes 'no contact in the last 12 months' and 'no contact ever'. A great deal or some' includes 'varies'. 'Very little or none' includes 'no contact in last 12 months' and 'no contact ever'. 'Did not talk about money' includes 'no contact in last 12 months' and 'no contact ever'. Emotional closeness was not asked if either parent never saw the focal child.

Liabile mothers' less positive relationships were not reflected in other measures of conflict nor for closeness to their child, either physically or emotionally. Liabile parents almost as often reported high as low general conflict (44–45% high and 55–56% low). Conflict over money was low: 28–31% frequently or sometimes argued about money in the previous 12 months. Mean distance from their former partner's house was almost identical: 375 km and 377 km.⁹⁵ Use of the median value showed a different pattern: with the median distance for liable mothers of 42 km and 25 km for liable fathers. Liabile parents did not differ significantly in reports of being emotionally very close to the focal child: 63% mothers and 56% fathers ($p=.281$) reported being very close.

5.2.3.2 *Parenting arrangement decision*

Liabile mothers and liable fathers reported some significant differences in how the parenting arrangements were decided for the focal child ($p<.001$). As Table 5.9 shows, liable mothers were less involved in the parenting arrangement decision. Although few liable parents (3–4%) reported that they decided, 27% of fathers reported that the mother decided; nine times higher than mothers stated *they* decided. This reflects circumstances that varied from the traditional majority-time mother arrangement.

Parenting arrangements were frequently agreed (37% mothers and 43% fathers), but mothers more often reported a judicial decision (36% compared with 20% fathers). Reflecting predominately older children in liable-mother cases, 7% were decided by the child alone (compared with 3% fathers).⁹⁶

⁹⁵This may not represent how close they lived from the focal child as some liable parents, particularly mothers, did not live apart from all or any of their children.

⁹⁶In 93% of liable-mother cases where the child only decided the liable mother had minority-time or split-residence.

Table 5.9 Liable parents: parenting arrangement decision for the focal child

	Liable mothers n=185	Liable fathers n=1,692
Parenting arrangement decision (%)		
Parents agreed or parents and child agreed	37.4	43.3
Judge decided	35.8	19.5
Mother decided	2.9	27.0
Father decided	14.8	3.7
Child decided	6.9	3.1
Other or just happened	2.2	3.5
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> <.001		
Used lawyer or mediation services (%)	72.3	57.9
<i>p</i> =.046		
Arrangements working well for child (%)	74.8	66.2
<i>p</i> =.177		
Arrangements working well for liable parent (%)	45.4	53.2
<i>p</i> =.258		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data.

Liable mothers used more formal assistance from lawyers and mediation services (73% compared with 58% fathers, *p*=.046). This is partly explained by longer time since separation and the prevalence of legal/judicial pathways for dispute resolution prior to the 2006 family law reforms (99% of these mothers separated before July 2006). These results are consistent with other research indicating high use of mediation, lawyers or courts where fathers had majority-time (Cashmore et al. 2010; Kaspiew et al. 2009).

5.2.4 **Personal wellbeing**

This section looks at personal wellbeing. As illustrated in Table 5.10. Liable mothers had significantly higher life satisfaction and marginally better psychological wellbeing than fathers.

Table 5.10 Liable parents: personal wellbeing

	Liable mothers n=184	Liable fathers n=1,688
Satisfaction with life as a whole (0=totally dissatisfied, 10=totally satisfied) (mean)	7.24	6.28
SE, CI	0.30, CI 6.65–7.84	0.13, CI 6.04–6.53
<i>p</i> =.003		
Personal wellbeing (3=low, 15=high) (mean)	10.77	10.20
SE, CI	0.31, CI 10.17–11.37	0.12, CI 9.98–10.43
<i>p</i> =.085		

Notes: Data are weighted. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. Personal wellbeing based on a composite score from three questions about how often in the last four weeks the respondent (i) felt calm and peaceful, (ii) had lots of energy and (iii) felt down (1=all the time, 5=none of the time); the former two reverse coded.

The data from the Family Court in Section 1.3.2 and the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 suggest that some minority-time arrangements occur because the mother had mental health issues. Liable mothers with low wellbeing and/or lower life satisfaction, such as those with mental health problems serious enough to affect parenting arrangements, may have self-selected out of the CSRS itself. This could positively skew reports of wellbeing. Alternatively, parenting time could be relevant for liable mothers’ sense of wellbeing, with parents who had more time with their children reporting higher levels of satisfaction and wellbeing than those with less time—thereby increasing the mean for the liable mother group as a whole. (Intragroup comparisons in the liable mother group for wellbeing and satisfaction are explored in Chapter 6.)

5.3 Key differences between liable parents

Table 5.11 details similarities and differences between liable mothers and liable fathers from the bivariate analyses above. Some relationships are likely to be nonsignificant in multivariate analyses once associations between variables are considered. Significant and marginally significant)⁹⁷ differences are noted. The latter variables are included as it is suggested that marginally significant variables should be considered

⁹⁷ Main income source and total personal wellbeing were marginally significant.

when determining factors to include in the multivariate analyses, (Hosmer & Lemeshow 2000) here logistic regression modelling.

Table 5.11 Liable mothers and liable fathers: similarities and differences

Similarities	Differences
Socio-demographic characteristics	
Age	Household composition
Lived with a partner	Has a resident child
Biological children from more than one relationship	Year separated
Previously married	Age of child
Years together	Child’s living arrangements
Number of former relationship children	Overnights with child
Sex of former relationship children	Parenting arrangements of former relationship children (18 years or younger)
Has degree or higher qualification	Split-residence
Net annual personal income	Age of youngest child
Net annual household income	Main income source
Household income (with expected child support deducted) below 60% of the median	Self-assessed poor financial circumstances
Experienced hardship in last 12 months	Hours worked per week
Former partner repartnered	Employment type of employment of former partner
Former partner repartnered with a new/stepchild	
Family dynamics:	
How well parenting arrangements working for liable parent	How parenting arrangements determined
How well parenting arrangements working for child	Used lawyer or mediation service
Distance between parents’ houses	Parental relationship quality in the last 12 months
Emotionally very close to child	Fearful relationship
Great deal or some conflict between parents in the last 12 months	
Frequently or sometimes argued about money in the last 12 months	
Wellbeing	
	Life satisfaction
	Personal wellbeing

Notes: ‘Child’ means focal child.

In summary:

- *Household composition*: liable mothers were more likely to have resident children whether they lived with a partner or not than liable fathers.
- *Financial resources*: liable fathers worked longer hours, reflecting mothers' higher part-time employment. Fathers were marginally more likely to have their main income source from self-employment than liable mothers. Nevertheless, more liable fathers reported poor financial circumstances than liable mothers.
- *Former relationship*: liable mothers had been separated longer than liable fathers.
- *Circumstances of former partner*: liable mothers were more likely to have a self-employed former partner than liable fathers.
- *Children*: mothers were more likely to be liable for older children than fathers. Liable mothers were less likely to have no time with the focal child in the last 12 months and had more overnights than liable fathers: 43% of liable mothers had shared-time or more. When all former relationship children were considered, more liable mothers had split-residence, equal-time or all children mainly with them than liable fathers.
- *Parenting arrangements*: liable mothers were more likely to have arrangements determined by a judge and to have used formal assistance than liable fathers. Few liable mothers reported they solely decided the parenting arrangements.
- *Parental relationship*: more liable mothers described their relationship in negative terms, especially fearful, than liable fathers.
- *Personal wellbeing*: liable mothers were more satisfied with their life overall and had marginally higher personal wellbeing than liable fathers.

5.3.1 ***Modelling of key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers***

In this section binary logistic regression modelling is used to identify the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers. This method was chosen over other methods that classify or predict group membership such as discriminant analysis for two reasons. First, logistic

is preferable when continuous data are not normal in distribution (such as number of overnights) or group sizes are very unequal and where some factors are categorical (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Second, it can be utilised with complex weighted data using the survey (*svy*) command in Stata. Use of the *svy* command produces results that report a model F test and t statistics that take into account the survey design degrees of freedom to compute p -values (Statacorp 2015).

To begin with, variables to be specified in the model were identified: those significant (or marginally significant) in the bivariate analyses. Variables to be considered were those listed in column 2 Table 5.11. To avoid collinearity and/or substantial reduction in the number of parents in the models some variables were omitted if the concept was better measured by another variable. The final variables to be tested in the model are detailed in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12 Variables used in logistic regression models of the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers

Concept	Measure
Household composition	Household composition ¹ (nominal) 1=lived alone or shared with other adults (reference category) 2=resident children and no partner, 3=partnered and no resident children, 4=partnered and resident children
Financial resources	Hours worked per week ² (continuous) Main income source (nominal) 1=salary or wages (reference category), 2=self-employment, 3=government payment Self-assessed poor finances (dichotomous) 1=poor or very poor, 2=just getting along or better (reference category)
Former partner employment	Type of employment of former partner (nominal) 1=employee (reference category), 2=self-employed, 3=not in paid employment, 4=don't know
Age of children	Age of youngest child ³ (continuous)
Time with focal child	Overnights in last 12 months ⁴ (continuous)
Parenting arrangements: all children	Arrangements of former relationship children ⁵ (nominal) 1=all children mainly with liable parent, 2=all equal-time, 3=all children mainly with other parent (reference category), 4=split-residence
Parental relationship	Parental relationship quality in the last 12 months ⁶ (nominal) 1=friendly, 2=cooperative (reference category), 3=distant, 4=lots of conflict, 5=fearful
Parenting arrangement decision	Parenting arrangement decision ⁷ (nominal) 1=mother decided, 2=parents agreed or parents and child agreed (reference category), 3=child decided, 4=father decided, 5=judge decided, 6=other or just happened
Wellbeing	Life satisfaction ⁸ (continuous)

Notes: 'Former relationship children' mean those 18 years or younger. 1. Also measures 'has resident child'. 2. Also measures 'employment type'. 3. Also measures 'age of focal child' and 'years separated'. 4. Measures all parenting time variables. 5. Also measures 'split-residence'. 6. Also measures 'fearful relationship'. 7. Also measures 'used lawyer or mediation'. 8. Also measures 'personal wellbeing'.

5.3.1.1 *Results from models*

Four models were specified. The dependent variable was 1=mother, 0=father. The models identify the key differences between liable parents. Model 1 included only socio-demographic variables for liable parents (household composition; hours worked; self-assessed poor financial circumstances; main income source) and type of employment of their former partner. Model 2 added child-related variables (age of youngest child; overnights with focal child; parenting arrangements of all former relationship children). Model 3 added family dynamics (relationship quality and parenting arrangement decision). Model 4 added life satisfaction. Numbers differed as Stata deletes listwise for missing responses on any variable in the model. (Model 1 $n=1,856/1,865$ and Model 4 $n=1,761$.) All models were statistically significant ($p<.001$), confirming the working hypothesis that liable parents do differ by gender.

Model 1 only included socio-demographic variables for liable parents and their former partner. Four variables were significant; one in part. Mothers were more likely to live with a partner (with or without resident children) or with children but no partner than live alone or share with other adults. Mothers worked fewer hours than fathers and were less likely to have poor financial circumstances. Mothers were more likely to have a former partner who was self-employed than an employee. Not in paid employment or unknown was nonsignificant. Mothers were marginally less likely to have a main income source from self-employment than wages or salary. Government payment was nonsignificant.

Model 2 added child related variables. Once time with the focal child and all former relationship children were included, differences in household composition disappeared for those with resident children whether partnered or not. Hours of work, self-assessed financial circumstances and former partner self-employed remained significant. There were no changes from Model 1 for nonsignificant variables or part of variables. Mothers were significantly more likely to have (i) older children and more overnights with the focal child and (ii) all children with them than all

children mainly with the other parent. Differences were nonsignificant for equal-time and split-residence.

Model 3 added family dynamics variables. All significant variables from Model 2 were unchanged. Mothers were more likely to describe their relationship as fearful (and marginally as lots of conflict) than cooperative. Friendly or distant were nonsignificant. Mothers were less likely to have solely decided the parenting arrangements than agreed.⁹⁸ Other categories of parenting arrangement decision-making were nonsignificant.

Model 4 added life satisfaction. This reduced the number of parents in the model to 1,761 because of missing responses to this question. Life satisfaction was nonsignificant (odds 1.03, $p=.667$). Its addition produced two changes: (i) self-assessed financial circumstances became marginally significant and (ii) lots of conflict became significant. This suggests that parenting time and/or parental relationship quality might be relevant to the nonsignificant result for life satisfaction in Model 4.

Three variables had one significant category with wide confidence intervals as this represented small subgroups of parents: (i) all children mainly with respondent; (ii) fearful relationship and; (iii) self-employed former partner. Using variables with fewer levels would create smaller confidence intervals for two variables, while a dichotomous measure of former partner self-employment produced the same confidence intervals, but with the loss of precision for which category was important. Results from these variables in the modelling should be interpreted cautiously.

Results of the models are presented at Table 5.13 below.

⁹⁸ Once time and parental relationship quality in the last 12 months were considered, whether a judge made the decision became nonsignificant.

**Table 5.13 Logistic regression models
of the key differences between liable
mothers and liable fathers**

Factor	Model 1: odds ratios	Model 2: odds ratios	Model 3: odds ratios	Model 4: odds ratios
Household composition (ref: lived alone or shared with other adults) resident children and no partner	8.11 (<i>p</i> <.001)	1.83 (<i>p</i> =.442)	0.86 (<i>p</i> =.850)	0.62 (<i>p</i> =.567)
partnered and no resident children	4.10 (<i>p</i> =.001)	4.39 (<i>p</i> =.002)	4.44 (<i>p</i> =.003)	4.38 (<i>p</i> =.004)
partnered and resident children	4.00 (<i>p</i> =.002)	1.26 (<i>p</i> =.663)	0.92 (<i>p</i> =.878)	0.81 (<i>p</i> =.716)
Hours worked per week	0.96 (<i>p</i> <.001)	0.96 (<i>p</i> <.001)	0.96 (<i>p</i> <.001)	0.96 (<i>p</i> <.001)
Self-assessed poor financial circumstances (ref: just getting along or better) poor or very poor	0.37 (<i>p</i> =.005)	0.44 (<i>p</i> =.032)	0.39 (<i>p</i> =.028)	0.43 (<i>p</i> =.055)
Main income source (ref: salary or wages) self-employment or other	0.43 (<i>p</i> =.052)	0.50 (<i>p</i> =.138)	0.58 (<i>p</i> =.234)	0.58 (<i>p</i> =.235)
government payment	0.90 (<i>p</i> =.831)	1.46 (<i>p</i> =.467)	1.84 (<i>p</i> =.309)	1.65 (<i>p</i> =.435)
Type of employment of former partner (ref: employee) self-employed	8.87 (<i>p</i> <.001)	7.77 (<i>p</i> <.001)	8.76 (<i>p</i> <.001)	8.97 (<i>p</i> <.001)
not in paid employment	0.94 (<i>p</i> =.627)	0.79 (<i>p</i> =.557)	0.87 (<i>p</i> =.739)	0.88 (<i>p</i> =.764)
don't know	0.59 (<i>p</i> =.326)	0.53 (<i>p</i> =.131)	0.79 (<i>p</i> =.583)	0.68 (<i>p</i> =.382)
Age of youngest child		1.17 (<i>p</i> <.001)	1.21 (<i>p</i> <.001)	1.19 (<i>p</i> <.001)
Parenting arrangements of all former relationship children (18 years or younger) (ref: mainly with other parent) mainly with liable parent		8.47 (<i>p</i> =.007)	7.56 (<i>p</i> =.012)	8.46 (<i>p</i> =.012)
equal-time		2.02 (<i>p</i> =.350)	2.63 (<i>p</i> =.176)	3.04 (<i>p</i> =.144)
split-residence		2.53 (<i>p</i> =.163)	2.21 (<i>p</i> =.273)	2.65 (<i>p</i> =.208)
Overnights with focal child in last 12 months		1.01 (<i>p</i> =.001)	1.01 (<i>p</i> <.001)	1.01 (<i>p</i> <.001)
Parental relationship in the last 12 months (ref: cooperative) friendly			1.10 (<i>p</i> =.842)	1.30 (<i>p</i> =.586)
distant			0.98	1.13

Factor	Model 1: odds ratios	Model 2: odds ratios	Model 3: odds ratios	Model 4: odds ratios
			(<i>p</i> =.959)	(<i>p</i> =.793)
lots of conflict			2.44 (<i>p</i> =.069)	2.75 (<i>p</i> =.039)
fearful			4.60 (<i>p</i> =.010)	4.88 (<i>p</i> =.011)
Parenting arrangement decision (ref: parents agreed or parents and child agreed) mother decided			0.12 (<i>p</i> =.001)	0.13 (<i>p</i> =.002)
child decided			0.84 (<i>p</i> =.773)	0.84 (<i>p</i> =.779)
father decided			1.72 (<i>p</i> =.415)	1.80 (<i>p</i> =.414)
judge decided			1.58 (<i>p</i> =.186)	1.54 (<i>p</i> =.218)
other or just happened			0.32 (<i>p</i> =.106)	0.36 (<i>p</i> =.185)
Life satisfaction				1.03 (<i>p</i> =.667)
Number of liable parents	1,856	1,811	1,792	1,761
F	10.82 F(10, 5,015)	8.21 F(15, 4,965)	5.63 F(24, 4,937)	5.52 F(25, 4,905)
Prob> F	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Notes: Data are weighted.

To sum up, controlling for all other factors, liable parents differed significantly on household composition; hours of work; self-employment of their former partner; parental relationship quality; age of youngest child; overnights with focal child; arrangements of all former relationship children; and how arrangements determined. Self-assessed financial circumstances differed marginally.

5.4 Discussion

The key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers were predominantly gender-specific and related to the mother role.

5.4.1 *Household composition*

Liable mothers were more likely to have a resident child (usually a former relationship child), and to live with resident children and no partner, but these differences disappeared once all former relationship children were considered. Mothers without resident children were 4.4 times more likely

than fathers to be partnered rather than live alone or share with other adults.

5.4.2 ***Employment***

Differences in hours of employment reflect the typically gendered employment pattern in Australian families: father full-time and mother part-time (Smyth et al. 2013) and high part-time rates for mothers with resident children and no partner (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). While separation provides an opportunity to reassess parental roles, patterns of gendered parenting remain relevant⁹⁹ with mothers in part-time employment (especially long part-time hours providing higher income and the flexibility needed to co-parent) and fathers in long full-time employment.

Of note, more fathers had self-employment as their main income than mothers although this marginal difference disappeared once parenting time was added to the model. This higher rate represents male occupations and that men devote more time to their businesses than women generating more income (Adema 2013). For some liable mothers, self-employment could be a secondary income source.

The findings on employment partially matched previous research. While mothers were more often out of the workforce than fathers, as was highlighted in the sole study of payers in the Scheme caseload (Silvey & Birrell 2004), the difference here was smaller and nonsignificant. This is because Silvey and Birrell's analysis included all *payers* whereas the present study's analytic sample excluded parents with no current liability—a sizeable group among female 'payers'. Previous research profiling a subgroup of minority-time mothers (those with 1–34% of nights: liability status not defined) found full-time employment common to this group and for the small number of mothers with equal-time (Kaspiew et al. 2009). Although liable mothers in the CSRS *as a group*

⁹⁹ Parents were not asked about pre-separation employment, nor views on gender roles relating to caregiving and employment. Whether post-separation issues had an impact on employment choices cannot be tested.

were more likely to be employed full-time, shared-time mothers had the highest full-time employment regardless of whether they were liable.

5.4.3 ***Time with children***

The stereotypical liable parent in the Scheme caseload lives apart from their child (or all their children), spending some weekend and holiday time with them (Department of Family and Community Services 2003). While 84% of liable fathers had minority-time with all their children, this applied to 54% of liable mothers. Liable mothers were 8.5 times more likely to have all the children mainly with them than with their former partner. Mothers had more overnights with the focal child even after controlling for arrangements of all children. This suggests mothers with minority-time tend to remain connected to children. Further, 27% of liable mothers had more nights than their former partner.

Liable mothers had less straightforward parenting arrangements (that is, not all children lived mainly with the other parent). Although split-residence became nonsignificant once overnights with the focal child and age of youngest child were considered, 24% of liable mothers had children with divergent arrangements. In the present study the rate for liable fathers matched the rate among separated families found previously (Smyth, Sheehan & Fehlberg 2001a; Smyth et al. 2008). The high rate for liable mothers is a new finding. While earlier research noted mothers with a child living elsewhere often had another child mainly with them (Weston et al. 2011) this was usually given as a reason for no liability.

5.4.4 ***Child age***

Liable mothers generally had older children than liable fathers reflecting that minority-time and split-residence increase for mothers with older children. Gender-defined roles and employment patterns for mothers with young children such as time out of the workforce and part-time work become less necessary for older children. Older mothers generally have higher human capital than younger mothers and therefore their incomes are more critical for assessment of liability in these cases.

Further, older children have more choice to move out of arrangements where all children were mainly with their mother.

The present study's findings on older age of children in liable-mother cases are consistent with previous Australian (Kaspiew et al. 2009; Qu 2004; Renda 2012), and international research (see, for example, Administrative Office of the Courts California 2000; Bakker & Mulder 2009; Sodermans, Matthijs & Swicegood 2013). The findings on older children and split-residence build on the limited Australian research (Hawthorne 2000).

5.4.5 ***Parental relationship quality***

Liable mothers more often described their relationship with their former partner in the last 12 months in negative terms. They were 2.8 times more likely to describe the relationship as 'lots of conflict' and 4.9 times 'fearful' than 'cooperative'.

Notably at 18%, liable mothers were the most fearful group in the CSRS and significantly more fearful than other mothers. While it was not unexpected that more women reported fearful relationships than men—10% of all mothers in the CSRS as a whole were fearful (compared with 6% of fathers, $p=.048$, see Appendix B, Table B1)—this difference was not solely about men and women. Instead it indicated the inclusion of liable mothers: payee mothers and payee fathers had similar reports of being fearful (9% and 7%, $p=.511$). In contrast, liable mothers had significantly higher reports of fearful than other mothers (18% compared with 9%, $p=.017$). Further, of those liable mothers who ever agreed to pay more child support than required ($n=37$), 28% did so because of concern for their own safety and 74% because they wanted as little as possible to do with their former partner.¹⁰⁰ Although reports of negative parental relationships were higher in the CSRS, especially for liable mothers, than in recent cohorts of separated parents (De Maio et al. 2013), Kaspiew and colleagues (2009) earlier noted high levels of fearful relationships among

¹⁰⁰ This was comparable or higher than reported by recently separated payee mothers who agreed to accept less child support (see Smyth et al. 2010).

mothers with daytime-only contact. Recent research suggests liable mothers' experiences of physical or emotional abuse were high (Qu et al. 2014). The present study's findings are consistent with this Australian work, and the international research, noting 'poorer' relationships characterised by conflict when the father had majority-time (Buchanan, Maccoby & Dornbusch 1992; Kielty 2006a; Vanassche et al. 2013) and domestic violence (Bemiller 2008; Herrerias 2008).¹⁰¹ The finding here that this applied to liable mothers *as a group* is new.

5.4.6 ***Parenting arrangement decision***

Liable mothers were significantly less likely to have solely decided the parenting arrangements. This could indicate that mothers were seen as the decision-maker (especially by fathers) when the children lived with their payee mother. Alternatively, minority-time mothers could be reluctant to say they made the decision if they felt this was incompatible with gendered expectations of the mother role. Fearful relationships may play a part. Around a third of liable mothers who reported that the father decided the arrangements were fearful, as were around half who reported that the child decided. This suggests that family dynamics are an important part of the story for liable mothers.

5.4.7 ***Former partner self-employment***

Liable mothers were nine times more likely to have a self-employed former partner. Here time and relative income are relevant: 40% of former partners were self-employed where the liable mother had split-residence and 25% when all the children were with her. Self-employed parents may have low taxable incomes not representative of actual capacity to pay. In addition, self-employment is gendered with fathers more often self-employed than mothers. The impact of self-employment found here is consistent with other research (Fehlberg & Millward 2014)

¹⁰¹ The present study uses the term 'domestic violence' rather than 'family violence' to emphasise that the descriptor 'fearful' applied to the relationship between former intimate partners.

which noted minimisation of income by self-employed shared-time fathers where the mother was the liable parent.

5.4.8 ***Income***

It was expected based on the nonresident mother literature highlighting financial difficulties (see, for example, Bemiller 2010; Greif & Pabst 1988; Herrerias 1995; Herrerias 2008) that mothers would be financially worse-off than fathers. Instead, liable parents had similar net personal and household incomes and had a similar proportion of households below 60% of the median equivalised income for their household size (once expected child support was considered). This applied even though liable fathers worked significantly more hours than liable mothers: 39% worked 45 hours or more each week compared with 10% of mothers. It is possible that some liable mothers had higher earning capacity per hour worked than fathers (which is likely to be why they are the liable parent under an income-based formula). However, behind this finding were dissimilar circumstances that affected household income but ‘cancelled out’ each other: liable mother households were more likely to include a resident child and liable fathers had significantly higher deductions for child support.

The absence of significant income differences related to who was liable. First, the minimum liability only applied to parents whose income was less than the self-support amount if they had minority-time, otherwise there was no current liability. Second, having equal or majority-time and being liable rather than the payee or having no current liability indicated they were the higher income parent. The present study’s finding that liable mothers were not objectively worse-off than liable fathers reflects mothers’ diverse parenting arrangements (inclusive of shared and majority-time) and that some liable fathers were economically vulnerable because of low human capital. (The former point is explored further in Chapter 6 profiling intragroup differences among liable mothers.)

Nonetheless, liable fathers had marginally higher self-assessed poor financial circumstances than liable mothers. Gender differences could

indicate that men and women rate their financial wellbeing differently, with some evidence that men perceive loss more than women (Haugen 2003) and that divorced men with children view themselves as worse-off than women (de Vaus et al. 2009; Smyth & Weston 2000). Liable fathers might experience the impact of paying child support on household incomes more than liable mothers. (As discussed later, mothers had lower liabilities than fathers.) This coupled with fathers' higher rate of resident stepchildren compared with liable mothers could affect fathers' perceptions.

5.4.9 ***Sex of children***

The other expected difference was that mothers would be mainly liable for boys. Some Australian research highlights that majority-time fathers more often had boys (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2003; Lodge & Alexander 2011; Parkinson, Cashmore & Single 2005), with international research supporting this trend (see, for example, Cancian & Meyer 1998; Juby, Le Bourdais & Marcil-Gratton 2005). Here boys were not over-represented with 32% of liable-mother cases involving only boys (compared with 28% for liable fathers, see Table 5.6). More boys were in majority-time with their father or split-residence than girls but this was nonsignificant and supports prior nonsignificant findings from Qu's (2004) study. This suggests that in Australia whether the child is a boy has less impact on living arrangements than elsewhere.

5.5 **Summary**

This chapter sought to explore whether liable mothers in Australia have a distinct profile. It did this by examining differences between liable parents across a broad range of measures.

A lower proportion of mothers were liable to pay child support at each original Scheme time category than fathers with the same amount of nights, and at no category were more than half of mothers liable. This is reflected in the key differences between liable parents.

Liabile mothers had older children reflecting their higher rate of split residence cases. Liabile mothers had more overnights with the focal child (mean=135 nights compared with 64 nights for liable fathers).

Consequently, they were significantly less likely to have minority-time of all their children. Overall, 46% of liable mothers had at least one majority-time or shared-time child compared to 16% of liable fathers.

Liabile mothers were less likely to live alone. Once the arrangements for all the former relationship children were taken into account, liable mothers were 4.38 times more likely to be living with a partner with no resident children than liable fathers. Liabile mothers worked fewer hours than liable fathers and were 8.97 times more likely to have a self-employed former partner. Liabile mothers reported a more negative relationship with their former partner in the last 12 months: 2.75 times more likely to report 'lots of conflict' and 4.88 times 'fearful'. In all, 18% of liable mothers were fearful. This was significantly higher than other mothers in the CSRS as a whole.

The next chapter (Chapter 6) analyses the intragroup differences and profiles liable mothers across the range of post-separation parenting arrangements.

Chapter 6 Differences between liable mothers

Findings in Chapter 5 apply to the key differences between liable parents. But differences also exist *within* the liable mother group. While 84% of fathers were liable for minority-time children, liable mothers had a range of arrangements. To further explore the characteristics of liable mothers in Australia and to better understand within-group variations, a typology based on the living arrangements of all former relationship children aged 18 years or younger was developed for the present study. This typology is based on the present study's theoretical concept of 'intensive mothering' as outlined in Section 1.5 and the operationalising of this concept as explained in Section 4.4.1.

This chapter is structured as follows. The first section (Section 6.1) outlines how the liable mother groupings were chosen. The second part (Section 6.2–6.5) profiles the four groups of liable mothers. The final section (Section 6.6) discusses some key differences.

6.1 A liable mother typology

Liable mothers were selected into four groups based on the 'intensity' of their day-to-day involvement as a mother, measured by the arrangements for all former relationship children. The four types of liable mothers were: 'less-time' (that is, less than half of the time); 'equal-time' (that is, around half the time); 'more-time' (that is, more than half the time); and 'split-residence' (that is, siblings have different arrangements). Details of the survey responses determining membership of these four groups are in Table 6.1.

This typology is used to explore whether intensity of mothering (that is, presence) is relevant as proposed in the theoretical approach advanced in Chapter 1. This approach suggests that enacting a mother role relates to a specific, gendered identity and behavioural norms for being a 'good' mother centring on direct caregiving and on prioritising children's needs.

Table 6.1 Liable mother typology

Group	% of all liable mothers	Survey response for each former relationship child	Arrangement
Less-time liable mothers	54.2	All: 'less than 50% of the time' or 'never'	Mainly with father
Equal-time liable mothers	10.9	All: 'roughly a 50/50 split'	Equal-time
More-time liable mothers	10.6	All: 'more than 50% of the time' or 'always'	Mainly with mother
Split-residence liable mothers	24.3	One or more children: 'more than 50% of the time' or 'always' and one or more children: 'less than 50% of the time' or 'never' OR One or more children: 'roughly a 50/50 split' and one or more children: 'less than 50% of the time', 'never', 'more than 50% of the time' or 'always'	Siblings split between parents
Total	100.0		

Notes: Liable mothers (*n*=185). Percentages are based on weighted data. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Excludes former relationship children aged 19 years or older. Children aged 18 years are included as those still in secondary education remain eligible for child support until the end of the school year. Categories may not match the focal child's time based on nights.

6.1.1 *Technical notes*

This typology used living arrangements of all former relationship children¹⁰² rather than overnights with the focal child for four reasons: (i) to ensure that all children were treated the same in allocating categories; (ii) some respondents had missing data on nights with the focal child; (iii) the small number of liable mothers with substantial (*n*=10) and major-

¹⁰² Split-residence includes cases where one or more children were in equal-time and one or more children were mainly with their mother or father. A sensitivity analysis was run with these cases included under the equal-time liable mother type. No changes in significance were found. Results discussed in this section use the inclusive definition of split-residence.

time ($n=11$) and; (iv) to differentiate arrangements where split-residence applied.

Three groups represent liable mothers with all children in the same time category—more-time, equal-time and less-time. The fourth group, split-residence, is important for the present study's theoretical approach as this represents liable mothers with more-time *and* less-time.

Profiling in this chapter covers *liable* mothers. Consequently, findings in this chapter do not represent mothers with these arrangements who were payees or had no current liability.

Again, variables chosen are those that intuitively relate to the present study's theoretical focus of the gendered performance of mothering. Socio-demographic variables are examined first, followed by family dynamics and wellbeing. Tabulations are performed using the *svy: tab* command and means are determined using the *svy: mean* command and restricted to the subpopulation of liable mothers using the *subpop* option in Stata. The former process produces an F-transformed Rao-Scott chi-squared test statistic as a default (Heeringa, West & Berglund 2010: 167) to take account of the complex survey data. The latter process produces linearised standard errors and 95% confidence intervals of the mean. The *test* command run post-estimation produces an adjusted Wald Test and an F-Ratio to show whether the means are statistically equivalent or not (UCLA Statistical Consulting Group n.d.).

Table 6.2 presents significant differences between these four small groups of liable mothers on socio-demographic variables.

Table 6.2 Differences between liable mothers: socio-demographic characteristics

	Less-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=79	Equal-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=50	More-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=31	Split- residence liable mothers <i>n</i>=25
Household composition (%)				
Lived alone or shared with other adults	37.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Resident children and no partner	17.7	38.1	81.0	45.3
Partnered and no resident children	41.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Partnered and resident children	3.8	61.9	19.1	54.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> <.001				
Main income source (%)				
Salary or wages	52.1	84.8	82.7	90.6
Self-employment or other	8.6	14.9	9.4	6.9
Government payment	39.3	0.3	7.9	2.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.001				
Employment (%)				
Not in paid employment	47.9	6.8	10.5	3.3
Short part-time (1–20 hours)	6.6	6.5	4.4	1.3
Long part-time (21–34 hours)	8.0	18.5	9.2	18.2
Standard full-time (35–44 hours)	29.1	60.0	71.8	59.8
Long full-time (45 hours or more)	8.5	8.2	4.1	17.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.001				
Experienced hardship in last 12 months (%)	46.8	16.1	18.7	19.3
<i>p</i> =.032				
Sex of former relationship children (%)				
All boys	38.5	15.9	66.1	11.6
All girls	29.8	39.9	28.5	13.0
Both sexes	31.7	44.2	5.4	75.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Less-time liable mothers n=79	Equal-time liable mothers n=50	More-time liable mothers n=31	Split- residence liable mothers n=25
<i>p</i> =.003				
Age (years)	39.48	37.81	43.81	40.50
(mean)				
SE, CI	1.10, CI 37.33–41.63	1.11, CI 35.63–39.99	1.76, CI 40.36–47.26	0.93, CI 38.69–42.32
<i>p</i> =.029				
Hours worked per week (mean)	18.91	32.57	33.90	36.92
SE, CI	3.54, CI 11.97–25.85	2.38, CI 27.92–37.22	3.56, CI 26.92–40.88	2.06, CI 32.88–40.96
<i>p</i> <.001				
Net annual personal income (mean)	\$29,209.48	\$41,507.20	\$47,311.86	\$50,683.49
SE, CI	\$3,237.80, CI \$22,862.00– \$35,556.96	\$3,183.16, CI \$35,266.82– \$47,747.58	\$3,034.99, CI \$41,361.96– \$53,262.75	\$4,849.30, CI \$41,176.75– \$60,190.23
<i>p</i> <.001				
Net annual household income (mean)	\$46,445.53	\$63,129.84	\$51,633.19	\$62,587.06
SE, CI	\$5,553.72, CI \$35,557.82– \$57,333.23	\$4,286.31, CI \$54,726.81– \$71,532.87	\$2,476.55, CI \$46,778.08– \$56,488.30	\$6,843.34, CI \$49,171.14– \$76,002.98
<i>p</i> =.031				
Years separated (mean)	7.55	5.60	8.58	9.13
SE, CI	0.54, CI 6.49– 8.62	0.84, CI 3.96– 7.23	2.50, CI 3.67– 13.49	0.85, CI 7.46– 10.80
<i>p</i> =.029				
Number of children with former partner (mean)	2.06	1.99	1.41	3.22
SE, CI	0.15, CI 1.75– 2.36	0.26, CI 1.49– 2.50	0.23, CI .97– 1.86	0.52, CI 2.20– 4.24
<i>p</i> =.007				
Child age (years)	12.41	9.86	12.83	14.66
(mean)				
SE, CI	0.87, CI 10.69–14.12	0.40, CI 9.08– 10.65	1.10, CI 10.67–15.00	0.48, CI 13.71–15.60
<i>p</i> <.001				
Youngest child age (years)	11.90	9.25	12.57	12.85
(mean)				
SE, CI	0.91, CI 10.11–13.69	0.38, CI 8.50– 10.01	1.21, CI 10.20–14.94	0.76, CI 11.36–14.35
<i>p</i> <.001				
Employment of former partner (%)				
Employee	44.2	70.1	16.6	50.1
Self-employed	24.2	11.4	25.1	38.2

	Less-time liable mothers n=79	Equal-time liable mothers n=50	More-time liable mothers n=31	Split- residence liable mothers n=25
Not in paid employment	15.9	16.9	11.8	8.9
Don't know	15.7	1.6	46.5	2.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.064				

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. ‘Resident children’ means in the household at least 50% of the time and includes dependent adult children. Parents with no resident children could have 1–49% nights with one or more children. Employment categories based on definitions developed by Baxter, Gray, Hand and Hayes (2012). ‘Child’ means focal child.

Table 6.3 shows significant differences between the four groups of liable mothers on family dynamics. This covers variables that measure the relationship between parents, and emotional closeness to their child. Whether the mother used a lawyer or mediation service and distance between parents’ houses are included under family dynamics as they can be a proxy for current or past conflict between parents. Of note, differences between liable mothers on the level of general conflict and conflict over money were nonsignificant.

Table 6.3 Differences between liable mothers: family dynamics

	Less-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=79	Equal-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=50	More-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=31	Split- residence liable mothers <i>n</i>=25
Parental relationship quality in the last 12 months¹ (%)				
Friendly	15.9	32.2	2.2	12.6
Cooperative	18.8	15.5	11.2	32.9
Distant	32.6	9.4	57.2	3.9
Lots of conflict	14.1	40.7	12.4	27.3
Fearful	18.5	2.2	16.9	23.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.051				
Great deal or some general conflict (%)	37.1	60.0	27.3	58.5
<i>p</i> =.321				
Frequently or sometimes argue over money (%)	19.8	53.7	25.1	36.7
<i>p</i> =.198				
Parenting arrangement decision (%)				
Mother decided	2.4	2.1	1.0	5.1
Parents agreed	31.5	54.1	3.1	46.4
or parents and child agreed				
Child decided	5.7	1.0	0.0	15.8
Father decided	19.4	26.6	1.0	4.8
Judge decided	37.9	15.4	63.4	27.9
Other or just happened	3.1	1.0	3.7	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.199				
Used lawyer or mediation (%)	70.6	38.2	87.6	85.4
<i>p</i> =.023				
Parenting arrangement working well for mother (%)	31.9	72.6	83.1	47.5
<i>p</i> =.012				
Distance between houses (%)				
10 km or less	18.9	73.1	31.5	33.9
11–25 km	18.8	9.4	4.3	7.4
26–50 km	12.9	17.5	9.4	6.4

	Less-time liable mothers <i>n</i> =79	Equal-time liable mothers <i>n</i> =50	More-time liable mothers <i>n</i> =31	Split- residence liable mothers <i>n</i> =25
51–100 km	18.0	0.0	47.3	2.7
101–500 km	11.4	0.0	0.0	3.5
501–1000 km	7.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
More than 1000 km or overseas	12.4	0.0	7.6	46.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.026				
Distance between parents' houses (mean)	298.15 km	11.26 km	154.32 km	820.11 km
SE, CI	83.22, CI 135.00–461.30	2.54, CI 6.29– 16.24	100.87, CI 0– 352.06	359.17, CI 115.98– 1,524.24
<i>p</i> <.001				
Emotionally very close to child² (%)	57.7	97.5	77.1	54.7
<i>p</i> =.030				

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. ‘Child’ means focal child. 1 ‘Distant’ includes ‘no contact with former partner in last 12 months’ and ‘no contact ever’. 2. Emotional closeness was not asked if either parent never saw the focal child (*n*=11 mothers).

Table 6.4 shows differences between the four groups of liable mothers on variables measuring personal wellbeing.

Table 6.4 Differences between liable mothers: personal wellbeing

	Less-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=79	Equal-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=50	More-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=31	Split- residence liable mothers <i>n</i>=25
Satisfaction with life as a whole (0=totally dissatisfied, 10=totally satisfied) (mean)	7.06	8.00	8.63	6.69
SE, CI	0.44, CI 6.19– 7.93	0.35, CI 7.32– 8.68	0.71, CI 7.16– 10.10	0.40, CI 5.91– 7.47
<i>p</i> =.019				
Personal wellbeing (3=low, 15=high) (mean)	10.62	11.03	12.57	10.18
SE, CI	0.40, CI 9.82– 11.41	0.30, CI 10.44–11.63	0.76, CI 11.07–14.07	0.57, CI 9.06– 11.30
<i>p</i> =.072				

Notes: Data are weighted. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data.

The following sections provide a profile of the four liable mother types.

6.2 Less-time liable mothers

Less-time mothers had all children living mainly with their father and represented around half (54%) of liable mothers. Most (79%) had no resident children.

Less-time liable mothers appear to be particularly disadvantaged; 48% were not in paid employment and 39% had government payments as their main income. Most liable mothers receiving government payments (*n*=17/21) were less-time liable mothers. Nine out of 17 were paid a Disability Support Pension. Consequently, 85% of less-time liable mothers had net personal incomes below \$40,000 and low household incomes (mean=\$46,446). Less-time liable mothers reported more than twice the level of hardship in the last 12 months as other liable mothers (47% compared with 16–19%).

Less-time liable mothers mainly had older children: 72% of focal children and 65% of youngest children were 11 years or older. They were less

satisfied with parenting arrangements: 68% felt it was not working well for them. Arrangements were often not reached amicably; 71% used a lawyer or mediation service, 38% had a judicial determination and 19% reported that the father solely decided the arrangements (data not shown).

Six per cent of less-time liable mothers spent no time with the focal child in the last 12 months and 26% had daytime-only contact.¹⁰³ Of those with no time, half ($n=4/7$) reported that their former partner ‘prevented contact’ and they were fearful. The remainder stated that their child did not want to see them. Those with daytime-only contact reported distance, child choice or other reasons for this arrangement.¹⁰⁴

Less-time liable mothers were evenly divided between positive, neutral and negative relationships with 18% fearful. Conflict was low, both generally and over money. A fifth lived at least 500 kilometres from their child, some perhaps as the outcome of a relocation dispute. Australian research notes a number of disputed cases where the mother moved without the child (Behrens, Smyth & Kaspiw 2009; Parkinson, Cashmore & Single 2010).

Less-time liable mothers had the second lowest life satisfaction and self-reported personal wellbeing. For some mothers, health problems could have affected the decision for minority-time: 23% rated their health as fair or poor (compared to 6–10% of other liable mothers). Data from the Family Court detailed in Section 1.3.2 suggest this could be relevant. For others, lower life satisfaction could be in response to the parenting arrangement which the majority (68%) also felt was not working well for them, but this is speculation.

In contrast to other liable mothers, and signalling less parenting time, a ‘poor’ pre-separation parent–child relationship or change in

¹⁰³ Data relate to liable mothers with all children with their father. One split-residence liable mother had daytime-only contact.

¹⁰⁴ Parents who saw the focal child in the daytime-only or had no time were asked the main reason for this. The information in this paragraph is based on responses to these two questions.

arrangements, 58% of less-time liable mothers reported being emotionally very close to their child. This figure may be even lower as it excludes mothers with no time with the focal child ($n=7$).

In summary, less-time liable mothers had poorer financial circumstances and low life satisfaction. More than half were outside the workforce or marginally attached and therefore reported the most hardship (47% had at least one measure of hardship in the last 12 months). Negative parental relationships were as common as positive or neutral. Two-thirds felt the arrangements were not working well for them and just over half (58%) reported being emotionally very close to their child.

6.3 Equal-time liable mothers

Equal-time mothers represented 11% of liable mothers. They had equal time of all their children, or unequal shared-time and reported 'roughly a 50/50 split'. Consequently, they all lived in households with children, 62% with a partner. They mainly had girls: 40% involved all girls.

Most (93%) equal-time liable mothers were in paid employment, with 68% full-time. They had the highest part-time (25%) and self-employment (15%). This pattern was not unexpected considering their substantial day-to-day caregiving and younger children. Long rather than short part-time hours applied, indicating better paid jobs with flexible arrangements partly because 26% had a degree or higher qualification.

Equal-time liable mothers had the second lowest personal income but the highest household income (mean=\$63,130) reflecting repartnering. Hence, they had the lowest reported hardship in the last 12 months and 41% describing their financial circumstances as 'comfortable' or 'prosperous'. Because of the way child support is calculated for shared-time cases, they were the relatively 'better-off' shared-time mothers. (Lower income equal-time mothers were more often payees or had no current liability.)

Equal-time liable mothers had the shortest relationships with 55% not previously married. They were younger than other liable mothers

(mean=37.8 years), recently separated (mean=5.6 years) and therefore newer cases. Two-thirds of focal children were aged 6–10 years (as were 75% of youngest children), highlighting peak age for equal-time and perhaps egalitarian views on sharing parenting of a recently separated cohort.

Reflecting the logistics of equal-time parenting, 73% lived within 10 kilometres and all within 50 kilometres of their former partner's house. Half had agreed parenting arrangements and 73% reported this was working well for them. However, 27% of equal-time liable mothers had an arrangement mainly decided by their former partner, suggesting a subgroup of less consulted, and less satisfied, liable mothers.

Almost all (98%) were emotionally very close to their child. Positive parental relationships were common: 32% friendly and 16% cooperative. Parental relationship quality could be bi-directional with parents reporting a positive relationship more likely to have equal-time, consistent with prior work (see, for example, Kaspiw et al. 2009; Smyth, Qu & Weston 2004). Nonetheless, 60% reported some or a great deal of general conflict and 34% frequently or sometimes argued about money. Equal-time creates more opportunities for conflict, particularly if parents communicate frequently. Perceptions of fairness over child support may overlay this.

Although conflict was relatively high—60% reported general conflict and 54% argued about money—equal-time liable mothers had the second highest life satisfaction and wellbeing. Higher wellbeing could be related to time with children and corresponding satisfaction with the workability of arrangements. Alternatively, financial wellbeing was similarly high and both types of wellbeing might be associated.

In summary, equal-time liable mothers had more recent separations and younger children. 'Reasonably comfortable' financial circumstances were common. Around half had a positive relationship with their former partner, with agreed parenting arrangements that worked well.

Nonetheless, some equal-time liable mothers had negative relationships, were less satisfied and reported conflict generally, and over money.

6.4 More-time liable mothers

More-time mothers represented 11% of liable mothers. These mothers reported that all their children lived mainly with them. Some had a child in unequal shared-time where they had more nights ($n=7/31$) rather than 'sole' time while others could be new majority-time arrangements where parents were still resolving the reassessment with the Child Support Agency.

Most (81%) lived with resident children and no partner. More-time liable mothers were older, as were their children who were predominantly boys: 78% of focal children were 11 years or older and 70% were boys.

The majority (76%) were employed full-time signalling higher income than their former partner as the mother had more nights. They had lower household incomes (mean=\$51,633) than liable mothers with equal-time and split-residence perhaps because of lower repartnering. Still, 95% ($n=28/31$) reported 'just getting along' or better with 19% experiencing hardship in the last 12 months.

Almost all (92%) lived less than 100 km from their former partner; closer than other liable mothers except those with equal-time. Yet, they had the least involvement with their former partner: 57% described their relationship as distant (or no contact) and 17% fearful. Conflict in general and over money was low, probably because of low interaction between parents.

Agreed arrangements were less common: 63% had a judicial decision and 88% used a lawyer or mediation service. Nonetheless, 83% felt arrangements were working well for them, perhaps because of more nights with all their children. This could also explain their significantly higher life satisfaction and better wellbeing.

In summary, more-time liable mothers had fewer children and were mainly not repartnered. More than half had distant relationships with

their former partner and, although they had high levels of intervention to resolve their parenting arrangements, they were the most satisfied with the workability and had the highest life satisfaction and personal wellbeing.

6.5 Split-residence liable mothers

Split-residence mothers represented 24% of liable mothers, and when weighted, the second largest group. Most ($n=19/25$) involved children of both sexes. Two-thirds were boys, slightly more often mainly with their mother and girls mainly with their father. More than half lived with a partner, a possible factor for changed arrangements for older children.

Split-residence liable mothers had larger families: 37% had four children with their former partner and 10% had this many under 19 years. Split-residence requires at least two children: 73% of split-residence liable mothers had two eligible children, one in their majority-time or, occasionally, shared-time, and another in minority-time

Almost all (98%) focal children, and 82% of youngest children, were 11 years or older. Reflecting this, split-residence liable mothers had been separated longer (mean=9.1 years). Most (77%) were employed full-time with 17% working long full-time hours. Those part-time were commonly working long part-time hours suggesting better quality jobs.

As expected, being liable when siblings were split between parents, they had the highest mean net personal income. Even so, 22% reported poor financial circumstances (compared with 5–9% of other liable mothers), and 19% reported experiencing hardship.

Most (90%) had salary or wages as their main income source and only 7% were self-employed. In contrast, 38% had a former partner who was self-employed. Other research (Fehlberg & Millward 2014) noted the implications of fathers' self-employment for mothers' liability in shared-time cases. The present study notes that self-employment might also be relevant to determining the liability in split-residence cases. In these cases, the mother's income from salary or wages is higher than the

father's reported income from self-employment where more scope exists to minimise income (either legitimately or not).

Further, the employment and generally higher income of split-residence liable mothers highlight the importance of identifying arrangements for all children in the case. Where the focal child was in minority-time ($n=11/25$), assuming that the same arrangement applied to siblings would misclassify split resident liable mothers as 'high income' minority-time liable mothers.

Split-residence liable mothers had children who were more involved in the parenting arrangements: for 16% the child decided and 10% the parents and child agreed. Most (85%) used a lawyer or mediation. Perhaps indicating decisions made by adolescents moving from shared or majority-time with their mother, 53% felt that the arrangement was not working for them, with distance an additional factor in lower satisfaction. Split-residence liable mothers lived farthest from their former partner and at least one of their children (mean=820 kilometres). A third lived within 10 kilometres perhaps indicating previous shared-time or a current mix of shared and majority/minority-time.

Parental relationships were evenly divided between positive (mainly cooperative) and negative. Split-residence liable mothers had the highest rate of fearful relationships of all liable mothers at 23%. Higher levels of conflict were apparent reflecting the complexity of arrangements and perceptions of fairness: 58% had some or a great deal of general conflict. Conflict over money was less common with 37% reporting frequent or some arguments about money.

Split-residence liable mothers reported the lowest life satisfaction and wellbeing, possibly because they had minority-time with at least one child or were fearful.

In summary, around half of split-residence liable mothers lived with a partner, 96% were in paid employment with the highest personal incomes. They had larger families with older children. For a substantial

minority (26%) the child agreed to, or decided, the arrangements. Half of split-residence liable mothers had negative parental relationships, often fearful, with high parental conflict in general, but less so about money. They often lived some distance from their former partner and at least one child.

6.6 Discussion

This chapter offered a typology of liable mothers based on four small parenting time groups—‘less-time’, ‘equal-time’, ‘more-time’ and ‘split-residence’—and explored between-group differences. A main finding is the association between employment, income, parenting time and liability. While 38% of less-time liable mothers were in full-time employment and 52% ($n=23/79$) in paid employment in total, 93% ($n=47/50$) of equal-time liable mothers, 89% ($n=28/31$) of more-time liable mothers and 97% ($n=23/25$) of split-residence liable mothers were in paid employment. The high levels of employment in the latter three parenting time groups, with 68–77% working full-time, was not unexpected as income and employment are central to determining the liable parent in cases with these parenting arrangements. These three groups comprised 46% of all liable mothers.

In contrast, less-time liable mothers were predominantly disadvantaged, with 39% relying on government payments as their main income source and almost half (47%) reporting at least one indicator of hardship in the last 12 months. Poor mental and/or physical health or other personal challenges could play some part¹⁰⁵ in their low employment rate and lower income as less-time liable mothers had poorer self-reported health and significantly lower life satisfaction. In addition, some less-time liable mothers reported that the Disability Support Pension was their main income source. This suggests that there is a substantial gap between the socioeconomic circumstances of (mainly low income) less-time liable mothers and liable mothers with shared or more time. Socioeconomic

¹⁰⁵ The literature in Chapter 2 (for example, Kaspiw et al. 2009) and information on reasons for Family Court decisions on less than 30% time also suggest poorer mental health as relevant.

differences could be obscured when liable mothers are considered in aggregate.

Significant differences in family dynamics and wellbeing were evident. Mothers with all or at least one child in minority-time frequently described the relationship with their former partner in negative terms: 33% of less-time and 51% of split-residence liable mothers reported lots of conflict or were fearful. Less-time and split-residence liable mothers also had lower personal wellbeing and significantly lower life satisfaction perhaps reflecting their lower day-to-day interactions with at least one child considering the gendered expectations of mothering as 'ever present'.

While men often become the minority-time parent by default (Kielty 2006b), and some resist having the identity of 'father' imposed on them (Mandell 1995a; Myers, M & Wilson 2014), minority-time is rare for mothers. It could signal less attachment to the 'primary carer' role or lower parenting capacity, with substance misuse, or mental health issues shaping child or judicial decisions (see, for example, Moloney 2001a). Family Court data (2009: 4–5) reveal that mental health issues explained a third of orders for 'no time' or 'less than 30% time' for mothers. Factors influencing minority-time mothering may affect selection into the Scheme caseload. Majority-time fathers may have less expectation of payment from mothers already facing disadvantage or health challenges and therefore chose not to apply. In addition, major mental health issues may preclude some mothers from being involved in surveys such as the CSRS either by exclusion from the sample for selection for interview (for example, no telephone, a Restricted Access Case, in prison or other institutional care), or refusal to be interviewed when contacted.

Further differences between liable mothers in child support, compliance, in-kind payment and other financial contributions are explored in the following chapters.

The next chapter (Chapter 7) examines child support and compliance.

Chapter 7 Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?

This chapter addresses the second research question: “Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?” Anecdotal evidence suggests low compliance among liable mothers. The empirical research points to *non-payment* but whether this equates to non-compliance has not been adequately tested, particularly from liable mothers’ perspective. In Australian research with recently separated parents (see, for example, Kaspiew et al. 2009) payee fathers report the lowest compliance: less than half received payment in full and on time. Liable mothers reported lower compliance than liable fathers but whether this was significantly lower was not stated. However, in the sole qualitative study with liable mothers and payee fathers (Millward, Campo & Fehlberg 2011) compliance did not appear to be lower in the cases where the mother was liable than those where the father was liable.

In the US, the lower compliance reported when the mother was the liable parent (Grall 2011; Stewart 2010) used data from payee fathers, and the difference was not statistically significant for the census data. In the limited US research using liable mothers’ reports, compliance was not found to be lower than for liable fathers (Greif 1997; Pearson & Anhalt 1994). In Norway, minority-time mothers were significantly less likely to pay than minority-time fathers (Lyngstad 2010) but some of this difference related to lower expectations of payment because mothers had more nights.

Evidence is scant and not clear-cut. What is expected to be paid; how compliance is measured; and what liable mothers contribute overall (either directly, in-kind or formal child support) are relevant to understanding compliance, but underexplored.

This chapter is structured as follows. The first section identifies the liable parents included in the analyses in this chapter and compares liable mothers and liable fathers on a range of child support variables. The second section details the child support compliance

measure and compares the compliance of liable mothers and liable fathers. The third section compares reports of compliance across the four groups (liable mothers, liable fathers, payee mothers and payee fathers). The fourth section describes the liable mothers and payee fathers who were former partners and reported on the same case. This section examines the reports of former partners about child support paid and how these reports converge or diverge from each other. The final section discusses intragroup differences among liable mothers on child support measures and compliance.

7.1 **Analytic sample: child support and compliance**

As before (see Section 5.2) similarities and differences between liable mothers and liable fathers are explored. The bivariate analyses in this section involve cross-tabulations using the *svy: tab* command and means using the *svy: mean* command and are restricted to the subpopulation of liable parents using the *subpop* option in Stata. Cross-tabulations in Section 7.3 compare liable parents and payees using the *subpop* option in Stata, here restricted to those with valid data on compliance. The cross-tabulations and means in Section 7.5 are restricted to the subpopulation of liable mothers. Again, the test statistics produced take account of the complex survey data.

To recap, liability status was identified from questions detailed in Section 4.2. Parents were asked if they currently paid or received child support, and if not, whether child support had been replaced by another arrangement. If both responses were negative, they were then asked if they were meant to pay or receive.

Significant differences were noted: 93% of liable fathers reporting they currently paid and 1% that they should pay (compared with 80% and 7% of liable mothers, $p=.001$). This could represent more liable mothers who were non-compliant or paid none of their liability. A minority of parents ($n=313/5,046$: $n=24/185$ liable mothers and $n=72/1,692$ liable

fathers)¹⁰⁶ had some other arrangement replacing cash child support: 12% of liable mothers and 6% liable fathers.

The comparative analyses use the full sample of 185 liable mothers and 1,692 liable fathers. Comparisons on compliance exclude parents with other arrangements.

7.1.1 ***How the liability was determined***

Parents were asked whether the amount of child support was determined by the Child Support Agency or did they work out the amount privately and register the agreement with the Agency. No significant differences were found when categorised into four groups (assessment, private agreement, registered agreement¹⁰⁷ and other, $p=.171$) because of small cell sizes and thus lack of statistical power. As expected, the majority (77–88%) of liable parents had an administrative assessment.

When the method of liability determination was categorised into assessment and agreement (private and registered agreement combined), more liable fathers reported an agreement (23% compared with 12% of liable mother, $p=.032$). Reports of agreements may be higher for liable fathers because of their higher rate of Private Collect. Private Collect liable fathers may view the transferring of the assessed amount privately as an ‘agreement’.

Alternatively, liable fathers’ higher reports of positive relationships may be influential with agreements, particularly private agreements, more common among friendly and cooperative parents.¹⁰⁸

Of note, not all liable parents who reported that another arrangement replaced cash child support identified these as agreements, perhaps because they were not registered with the Child Support Agency. Half of liable mothers ($n=12/24$) and some liable fathers ($n=25/72$) who reported

¹⁰⁶ See Section 4.2 for an explanation of how this subgroup of liable parents was determined.

¹⁰⁷ No liable mothers reported “other”.

¹⁰⁸ Further analysis of the data show 86% of liable mothers and 67% of liable fathers with private agreements had a friendly or cooperative relationship.

another arrangement also reported that there was an assessment in place which they apparently ignored.

7.1.2 *Method of collection*

Payments can be transferred privately between parents (Private Collect) or collected and transferred by the Child Support Program (Child Support Collect). Liable parents differed significantly by collection method. As Table 7.1 indicates, fathers were evenly split between collection methods while 66% of liable mothers had Child Support Collect and were significantly more likely to have always had this arrangement.

Table 7.1 Liable parents: child support collection method

	Liable mothers n=184	Liable fathers n=1,680
Collection method (%)		
Child Support Collect	65.5	51.0
Private Collect	34.5	49.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.027		
Child Support Collect now, previously Private Collect (%)	16.6	44.8
<i>p</i> <.001		
Private Collect now, previously Child Support Collect (%)	31.6	13.7
<i>p</i> =.013		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Child Support Collect mothers (n=115) and fathers (n=949). Private Collect mothers (n=67) and fathers (n=733).

High rates of Child Support Collect were unexpected as official data indicate that Child Support Collect applied in 42% of registered cases with a female payer (Child Support Agency 2009a: 27). Some of this difference is the inclusion in the official data of cases with no current liability. These cases were mainly Private Collect. In addition, time since separation (as a proxy for time since registration) may explain this as liable mothers in the CSRS had been separated significantly longer than liable fathers. Older cases were registered at a time when Child Support Collect was the dominant method.

7.1.3 ***Expected child support amount***

As indicated in Table 7.2, the expected liability for liable mothers was less than half of liable fathers (mean=\$2,901 compared with \$6,702, $p<.001$). Further, 15% of mothers had a liability less than the \$339 minimum assessment and 43% less than \$1,000. In contrast, 22% of liable fathers had a liability below \$1,000 and 44% \$6,000 or more. Just 11% of mothers had a mean liability equivalent to, or more than, the mean amount for fathers. The median expected amount¹⁰⁹ for liable mothers was \$1,976 and \$5,200 for liable fathers. Lower liabilities could relate to lower incomes, shared-time or split-residence.

Mothers' lower expected payment was consistent with the limited Australian research (Silvey & Birrell 2004; Wolffs & Shallcross 2000) indicating more mothers with a minimum liability.

¹⁰⁹ While medians are mentioned where appropriate, the complex survey design limits the validity of statistical testing of differences in medians between liable mothers and liable fathers.

Table 7.2 Liabe parents: expected amount and actual child support paid

	Liabe mothers <i>n</i>=160	Liabe fathers <i>n</i>=1,531
Expected amount of child support (%)		
\$0	3.0	2.0
\$1–339	12.5	9.9
\$340–999	27.9	9.8
\$1,000–1,999	7.1	5.3
\$2,000–2,999	5.9	4.8
\$3,000–3,999	19.1	7.9
\$4,000–4,999	11.0	8.2
\$5,000–5,999	1.4	7.9
\$6,000–6,999	0.8	6.5
\$7,000–7,999	4.9	7.8
\$8,000–8,999	0.0	4.1
\$9,000–9,999	2.7	3.2
\$10,000–10,999	1.0	4.4
\$11,000–11,999	0.0	2.0
\$12,000 or more	2.7	16.3
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> <.001		
Expected child support (mean)	\$2,900.66	\$6,701.68
SE, CI	\$381.88, CI \$2,152.01– \$3,649.31	\$279.35, CI \$6,154.03– \$7,249.33
<i>p</i> <.001		
Actual child support paid (mean)	\$3,093.72	\$6,719.17
SE, CI	\$396.72, CI \$2,315.97– \$3,871.48	\$267.00, CI \$6,195.73– \$7,242.48
<i>p</i> <.001		

Notes: Data are weighted. Actual amount paid: mothers (*n*=130) and fathers (*n*=1,482). Actual amount paid excludes liable parents who reported that they paid none of the expected amount. (Mean \$3,048.71 mothers and \$6,680.31 fathers if nothing paid was included) Most liable parents with an expected amount of \$0 had another arrangement that replaced cash child support (all liable mothers and *n*=17/18 liable fathers). The minimum assessment was \$333 or \$339 depending on whether the child support period commenced from 1 January 2008 or earlier.

7.1.4 **Actual child support paid**

Almost all (98%) fathers reported paying something (compared with 89% of mothers, *p*=.002). This means that 11% of liable mothers paid *none* of the expected amount.

Actual amount paid by mothers, excluding those who paid none of the liability, was significantly lower (mean=\$3,094 compared with \$6,719 for fathers, *p*<.001) reflecting lower expected amounts.

7.1.5 ***Paid in full***

The majority (85–92%) of liable parents reported paying in full. This did not differ by collection method.

While slightly more fathers than mothers reported paying more than expected, this was nonsignificant and consistent with fathers' reports in other Australian research (De Maio et al. 2013: 110). Higher amounts could be genuine additional payments or for arrears.

7.1.6 ***Paid on time***

Timeliness is the other important component of compliance (Ha, Cancian & Meyer 2011) although often not measured. Both fullness *and* timeliness matter if child support is relied upon for household expenses. As Table 7.3 shows, most (75–83%) liable parents reported paying 'always' on time and 10–19% 'mostly' on time. A minority of mothers admitted 'rarely' or 'never' paying on time. Of those who paid late, 50% of mothers and 61% of fathers previously paid regularly.

Table 7.3 Liable parents: regularity of payment

	Liable mothers n=144	Liable fathers n=1,582
Paid on time (%)		
Always	75.4	83.3
Mostly	19.2	10.8
Sometimes	1.4	4.0
Rarely	1.0	1.0
Never	3.0	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.138		
Child Support Collect and always on time (%)	74.4	77.9
<i>p</i> =.734		
Private Collect and always on time (%)	77.8	89.3
<i>p</i> =.083		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Child Support Collect mothers (*n*=101) and fathers (*n*=910). Private Collect mothers (*n*=43) and fathers (*n*=660).

Payments transferred between parents were more regular than via Child Support Collect, although mothers differed little by collection method. Private Collect mothers were marginally less regular than fathers (78% compared with 89%, *p*=.083). Small cell sizes limited comparisons by collection method to always on time.

7.1.7 Ever paid and reasons for non-payment

Parents who were meant to pay (*n*=10 mothers and *n*=24 fathers) were asked if they had ever paid and the main reason for current non-payment. Most (84–86%) previously paid. Six mothers claimed child support was ‘not needed’: four because they had shared-time or split-residence; one paid expenses in lieu of child support; and one had a former partner who told her ‘not to worry about paying’. The other three gave reasons specific to their case: they were briefly liable when the child was with his father; they were in dispute about liability as the father minimised his income; and the father never paid when he was liable.

In contrast, more than half of fathers (*n*=13/24) were unwilling to pay because they had no time with their child; the amount was unfair or unaffordable (for some because of current unemployment); or ‘it was not spent on the child’. Seven fathers did not pay because they felt it was ‘not

needed': time or expenses were shared; an agreement between parents was in place; or the father now had 'sole time'. Three were organising for deductions to be set up and one father refused to answer.

While both mothers and fathers reported unfairness as an explanation, affordability, inappropriate spending and lack of parent-child time were only raised by liable fathers.

7.2 **Compliance**

As detailed in Section 4.4.2, compliance was measured as payment made in full *and* always on time. All payment not in full and/or not on time is treated as non-compliance. While a strict definition of compliance, this measure is used because both fullness and timeliness are important. This definition is consistent with other contemporary Australian research on compliance (see Smyth, Vnuk, Rodgers and Son 2014 and research conducted by AIFS such as Kaspiew et al. 2009; Qu & Weston 2010; Qu et al. 2014; De Maio et al. 2013). Further, it is consistent with the expectation by the CSA that payment is made in full and on time (Child Support Agency 2008).

7.2.1 ***Compliance by assessment and collection method***

Table 7.4 shows the rate of compliance for liable mothers and liable fathers overall; in assessment cases; and by collection method. Although liable mothers had lower compliance overall (64% compared with 77% fathers, $p=.102$), the difference did not reach significance. To test if compliance was overestimated by including agreements (especially private agreements where compliance was 100% for mothers), comparisons were restricted to assessment cases. Differences now approached significance (62% mothers compared with 78% fathers, $p=.057$).

Liable parents did not differ significantly on compliance in Child Support Collect cases. In contrast, differences in compliance for Private Collect cases approached significance (67% for mothers and 81% for fathers, $p=.092$).

It is probable that the compliance rate for liable mothers was not *significantly* lower than liable fathers overall—even though more than one-in-ten liable mothers paid none of the liability—because the rate of timeliness of payment was similar for liable mothers and liable fathers.

Table 7.4 Liable parents: compliance by assessment type and collection method

	Liable mothers n=146	Liable fathers n=1,496
All (%) <i>p</i> =.102	64.4	77.1
Assessments (%) <i>p</i> =.057	62.1	77.7
Child Support Collect (%) <i>p</i> =.364	63.8	73.6
Private Collect (%) <i>p</i> =.092	66.6	80.8

Notes: Data are weighted. Child Support Collect mothers (*n*=98) and fathers (*n*=876). Private Collect mothers (*n*=47) and fathers (*n*=607).

7.3 Compliance rates for liable parents and payees

Australian research comparing reports from resident fathers and nonresident mothers on compliance are not common. (This has changed somewhat since 2008.). As noted in Chapter 1, child support research focuses on resident parents’ (mainly mothers’) reports. While this research noted low receipt of child support by resident fathers this frequently reflected ‘anything paid’, not compliance (see Smyth, Vnuk et al. 2014 for discussion of the evolution of compliance measures in Australia).

In this section reports of compliance from liable mothers, liable fathers, payee mothers and payee fathers are compared. While not as detailed as the previous sections comparing liable parents, it is important to illustrate the overall picture. To recap, parents who have no current liability (or where the liable parent or payee reports that the expected

amount is \$0)¹¹⁰ are not included in the analytic sample for comparison of compliance rates.

To aid in comparisons with the post-2008 Australian family law evaluations (where compliance was reported for all four groups), results detailed at Table 7.5 are based on the four-level compliance measure used in the AIFS’ work reviewed in Chapter 2.

**Table 7.5 Liable parents and payees:
compliance**

	Liable mothers n=146	Liable fathers n=1,496	Payee mothers n=2,026	Payee fathers n=159
Compliance (%)				
In full and on time	64.4	77.1	45.5	39.0
In full and not on time	16.9	12.4	22.1	21.7
In time and not in full	2.3	3.7	3.2	3.0
Neither in full nor on time	16.4	6.9	29.3	36.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> <.001				

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. ‘Neither in full nor on time’ includes parents who should pay or receive (including did not know expected amount or varies). Excludes parents with (i) expected amount \$0; (ii) always on time but missing expected and/or actual; (iii) full payment but did not know regularity; (iv) missing regularity and expected and/or actual; and (v) other arrangements (n=24 liable mothers, n=72 liable fathers, n=87 payee mothers and n=22 payee fathers). Differences between liable fathers and payee mothers (*p*<.001) and between liable mothers and payee fathers (*p*=.088).

As expected, liable fathers reported the highest compliance and payee fathers the lowest. Differences between liable fathers and payee mothers were significant (*p*<.001), and those between liable mothers and payee fathers marginally significant (*p*=.088).

Non-compliant liable fathers mainly paid in full and late. In contrast, non-compliant liable mothers were as often in full and late as neither in full *nor* on time. Liable mothers were twice as likely to report being

¹¹⁰ One liable father, 10 payee mothers and two payee fathers reported that they paid, received, or should receive, child support and reported an expected amount of \$0. These parents may pay or receive child support in another form such as in-kind or have a debt offset in place.

neither in full nor on time (16% compared with 7% of liable fathers, $p=.040$), reflecting that 11% of mothers (compared with 2% of fathers) paid none of the expected amount. In contrast, both payee fathers and payee mothers had high reports of receiving payments neither in full nor on time (36% fathers and 29% mothers. $p=.221$).¹¹¹

However, when compliance was measured with a dichotomous variable (compliant/non-compliant), unlike in Table 7.5 where only the difference between liable fathers and payee mothers reached significance, now both comparisons were significant. Liable mothers reported significantly higher compliance than payee fathers (64% compared with 39%, $p=.017$) and liable fathers than payee mothers (77% compared with 45%, $p<.001$).

The pattern of compliance found here is consistent with the post-2008 survey research using cohorts of recently separated parents. This research found that liable mothers reported lower compliance than liable fathers (Kaspiew et al. 2009; Qu & Weston 2010; Qu et al. 2014) and that payee fathers in these studies and in more recent cohorts (De Maio et al. 2013) consistently reported the lowest rate. Notably, unlike the research presented here, the lower compliance reported by payee fathers in the most recent cohort (Kaspiew, Carson, Dunstan et al. 2015) was significantly lower than for payee mothers.¹¹²

7.3.1 **Discussion**

Research with nonresident fathers and resident mothers (hereafter 'liable-father cases')¹¹³ indicates that nonresident fathers consistently report higher compliance than resident mothers (in Australia see, for example, Sutton cited in Fehlberg & Smyth 2000; Harrison 1993). Differing reports reflect parents who self-select into surveys, with

¹¹¹ None of the expected amount was received by 19.3% of payee mothers and 21.6% of payee fathers ($p=.176$).

¹¹² Compliance rates for liable parents were not calculated. Liable parents reported similar rates of full payment.

¹¹³ The term 'liable-father-case' is used as shorthand to indicate research with nonresident fathers, resident mothers and child support research that focuses on payments from liable fathers to payee mothers regardless of the parent whose reports were analysed.

separated fathers and mothers coming from different segments of the population (Smyth 2002). Australian research includes more involved, higher income minority-time fathers (Smyth, Sheehan & Fehlberg 2001b). Parents who are untraceable, rarely or never see their child (Kaspiew et al. 2009) or do not provide financial support (Smyth & Weston 2004) appear less likely to participate. In contrast, payees' responses (mainly mothers) span the range of nonresident parent involvement, therefore samples 'contain "average"...[majority-time] parents and "active"...[minority-time] parents' (Jensen & Clausen 1997: 23). Another view is that majority-time mothers' reports indicate their level of satisfaction with the father as a provider and are lower than the actual support provided (Madhavan, Richter & Gross 2015). This partly explains differences between mothers and fathers in liable-father cases.

Research using responses from both members of a former couple and where the children lived mainly with their mother (Braver et al. 1991; Harrison 1993; Kitterod 2004) found fathers reported substantially higher compliance than mothers, reflecting the ways that men and women view financial contributions (Harrison 1993; but see Smock & Manning 1997). The small amount of research involving 'role reversal' former couples in Norway indicate a higher level of concordant reports on parent-child time when the children lived mainly with their father than when they lived mainly with their mother (Jensen 2005). However, parents were not asked about child support and the level of concordant reports could differ when money is measured.

Further, internalised gender role expectations may influence liable parents' reports of compliance. While child support is assumed to be gender-neutral, liable fathers who want to avoid being labelled 'deadbeat' may report always paying. If so, fathers' responses could indicate social desirability and be aspirational, rather than actual, behaviour with some evidence from the international research that social desirability does affect fathers' responses about financial responsibility (Madhavan, Richter & Gross 2015) based on the prevailing expectations of involved post-separation fathering.

In contrast, liable mothers (particularly those with minority-time) might already feel judged as a ‘bad’ mother. Mothers are more harshly judged by the general community when they are the liable parent (see, for example in Australia, Funder & Smyth 1996a; Smyth & Weston 2005), partly because they are perceived to be not living up to the expectations of the mother role as self-sacrificing and ever present. For some liable mothers being labelled as ‘deadbeat’ for non-compliance could have a lesser impact, especially when they are contributing financially and/or in other ways. However, this is speculative.

To test the extent to which differences on reported compliance between liable parents and payees (particularly liable mothers and payee fathers) reflect different populations of separated parents, responses from the former couple sample were examined. This confirmed that liable mothers and payee fathers in the CSRS did come from different segments of the separated parent population. This was apparent from variables measuring objective factors such as number of former relationship children. To better understand different perceptions of compliance by gender, the next section explores responses from the former couple sample.

7.4 Compliance in the former couple sample

The results described in Table 7.5 represent all parents with valid compliance information including where both former partners were interviewed—1,990 liable parent/payee former couples.¹¹⁴ This section explores the extent to which former partners’ responses on child support payment match (i.e., ‘concordant reports’) or do not match (i.e., ‘discordant reports’). The focus is on the 78 former couples where the mother was the liable parent (hereafter ‘liable-mother dyads’). Where applicable, comparisons are made with 827 former couples where the father was the liable parent (hereafter ‘liable-father dyads’). (Data on liable-father dyads are deliberately not reported in the same detail as liable-mother dyads.) Dyadic analysis provides a comprehensive view of

¹¹⁴ The rationale for excluding the 90 ex-couples who were not liable parent/payee is explained in Chapter 4.

the meaning of child support and financial responsibility from the perspective of each parent. Former couple data compare reports of the same case and ‘although couple and family data do not make for tidy analysis, they better represent the accuracy of differential perceptions in families’ (Ahrons 2011: 530).

An important caveat is that the former couple data are reported unweighted and, because of oversampling, include substantially more shared-time parents than the weighted data described above. In addition, payees (especially fathers) report on more involved former partners than found among all payees, with more overnights and few liable parents who never saw the focal child.¹¹⁵ This is common with former couple samples (see, for example, Qu et al. 2014; Seltzer & Schaeffer 2001).

Data in section 7.4.1 to 7.4.3 are largely descriptive. The first part describes the liable-mother dyad sample in aggregate. This is followed by an analysis of the concordance of responses. Data from former partners for relevant questions were extracted and reproduced in spreadsheet format so that responses from both parents could be examined side-by-side and compared for level of concordance.

7.4.1 *Characteristics of parents in the liable-mother dyads*

Liable mothers were on average 40.5 years old and payee fathers 45.6 years old. More mothers than fathers had repartnered (40% and 26%). Ex-partners were together on average 12 years, separated for 6 years and had 2 children. The focal child was around 11 years old (mean=11.4 years) as was the youngest child (mean=10.6 years). The focal child lived roughly equally with both parents or mainly with their mother in 53% of cases. Parenting arrangements were agreed by 36–38% of parents and 30% determined by a judge. The child spent 145 nights in the last 12 months with their mother according to her report and 129 nights according to her ex-partner. When all former relationship children were

¹¹⁵ For example, 23% of payee fathers reported that the liable mother had no overnights in the full sample (unweighted) compared with 9% in the former couple sample.

considered, 37–38% of cases involved all children mainly with their father.

Negative relationships were reported by 37–42% of former partners: 18% of mothers and 8% of fathers were fearful. Around a third frequently or sometimes argued about money in the last 12 months. This reveals higher conflict for fathers than the full sample where 45% of payee fathers had a positive relationship. This could have implications for the level of concordance between reports of former partners if, as research suggests (see, for example, Waller & Emory 2014), parental relationship quality affects responses. (Details of socio-demographic characteristics and family dynamics are presented in Appendix B, Table B2.)

Child support was mostly determined by an assessment with 10% of mothers and 16% of fathers reporting a registered or private agreement. Two-thirds were Child Support Collect. The mean expected amount was \$3,516 according to mothers and \$3,004 according to fathers. Mothers reported they paid a mean actual amount of \$3,689 and fathers that they received a mean amount of \$3,494 (excluding parents who reported that none of the expected amount was paid).

7.4.2 *Concordance on reports on fullness, timeliness and compliance in the liable-mother dyads*

In the overall sample, payee fathers reported significantly lower compliance than liable mothers (39% payee fathers compared with 64% liable mother, $p=.017$). To test whether this represents sample differences in the two groups and to better understand compliance, responses from former couples on fullness, timeliness and compliance were compared. (This was restricted to liable-mother dyads where both parents had valid information.) Discrepant reports were common. For fullness ($n=51$ ex-couples) 78% gave the same response. In 69% of liable-mother dyads both reported payment in full. Concordance on timeliness ($n=62$ ex-couples) was lower than for full payment: 63% gave the same response. In 40% of liable-mother dyads both reported payment always on time. Concordant reports of former partners on fullness were slightly higher than the compliance rate reported by all payee fathers (69% compared

with 66%) but timeliness was lower (40% compared with 58%). (Detailed tables for levels of concordance on fullness and timeliness are shown in Appendix B, Tables B3–B6.)

Table 7.6 presents a matrix comparing former partners’ reports of compliance. Percentages in bold represent concordance and that in italics possible concordance where one parent reported another arrangement¹¹⁶; or the payee father reported compliance and the mother had (i) missing expected and/or actual payment and always paid on time or (ii) full payment and regularity was not known.

¹¹⁶ This includes one payee father who stated that the expected amount was \$0 and one payee father who reported always on time but the expected and actual varies. These could represent other arrangements in lieu of cash child support.

**Table 7.6 Comparison of reports from
78 former couple liable-mothers and
payee fathers: compliance**

	Payee father: comply (%)	Payee father: non- comply (%)	Payee father: should receive if liable mother has other arrangement. (%)	Payee father: other arrangement (%)	Payee father: missing expected, actual or regularity (%)
Liable mother: comply (%)	19.2	28.2		1.3	7.7
Liable mother: non- comply (%)	2.6	20.5		3.8	1.3
Liable mother: should pay if payee father has other arrangement. (%)				1.3	
Liable mother: other arrangement (%)	1.3		5.1	Not applicable	1.3
Liable mother: always paid on time, missing expected and/or actual (%)	3.8				
Liable mother: in full, missing regularity (%)	1.3				
Liable mother: missing expected and/or actual (%)					1.3

Notes: Data are unweighted. Sum of percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding
Percentages in bold represent concordant reports and those in italics possible
concordant reports where one parent had another arrangement or the payee father
reported compliance and the liable mother reported (i) always paid on time but missing
expected and/or actual amount or (ii) full payment but missing regularity.

Concordance on compliance was low because of more divergent
responses on timeliness. Where restricted to former couples where both

had valid information ($n=55$), 56% of ex-partners gave the same response and in 27% ($n=15$) of liable-mother dyads both reported that the mother was compliant. Concordance on non-compliance was slightly higher ($n=16$) than for compliance. In the overall sample, 39% of payee fathers reported compliance.

7.4.3 **Differences in level of concordance in liable-mother and liable-father dyads**

In this section liable-mother dyads are compared with liable-father dyads. As seen in Table 7.7, liable-mother dyads had a slightly lower rate of concordance on fullness, and regularity than liable-father dyads, but higher concordance on not in full, and on not always on time, most notable in the latter. There was higher discordance among former partners in the liable-mother dyads than for in the liable-father dyads for fullness (78% compared with 83%) but little difference on timeliness (63% compared with 65%). Payee fathers had the lowest reports of full payment and timeliness and thus responses in liable-mother dyads were expected to be more discordant.

Table 7.7 Liable-mother and liable-father dyads: level of concordant reports on whether payment made in full and always on time

	Liable-mother dyads <i>n</i>=62	Liable-father dyads <i>n</i>=760
Former partners’ reports for paid in full (%)		
Both reported paid in full	68.6	78.5
Both reported not in full	9.8	4.2
Discordant responses	21.6	17.3
Total	100.0	100.0
Former partners’ reports on paid on time (%)		
Both reported paid always on time	40.3	53.6
Both reported not paid on time	22.6	11.7
Discordant responses	37.1	34.7
Total	100.0	100.0

Notes: Data are unweighted. Fullness: liable-mother dyads ($n=51$) liable-father dyads ($n=623$). ‘Should pay’ or ‘should receive’ are treated as not in full and not always. Excludes dyads where fullness and/or regularity cannot be determined or where one parent had another arrangement.

Table 7.8 details the level of concordance on compliance between former partners in the liable-mother and liable-father dyads. While high levels of discordance were common (44% and 40%), the pattern of concordant reports differed. As expected, liable mothers and payee fathers had a substantially lower rate of concordant reports that the payment was in full and always on time (27% compared with 45% in liable-father dyads) but higher concordance—almost double—on non-compliance (29% compared with 15% in liable-father dyads). Notably, reports of former partners more often matched when the liable mother was *non-compliant* than compliant. This may be partly explained by the higher reported rate of payment of none of the expected amount by liable mothers.

Table 7.8 Liable-mother and liable-father dyads: level of concordant reports of compliance

	Liable-mother dyads n=55	Liable-father dyads n=672
Former partners' reports on compliance (%)		
Both reported compliance	27.3	44.9
Both reported non-compliance	29.1	15.5
Discordant reports	43.6	39.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Notes: Data are unweighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Excludes dyads where either parent had (i) missing information on expected and/or actual amount; (ii) expected amount of \$0; (iii) another arrangement; or (iv) full payment but did not know regularity. Parents who should pay or should receive and did not know the expected amount or it varies are treated as non-compliant.

7.4.4 *Discussion*

A similar rate of compliance was found among former couples in liable-father dyads as the rate for payee mothers in the full sample (45%) but lower for former couples in liable-mother dyads than for payee fathers in the full sample (27% compared with 39% for all payee fathers).

Examination of responses from former couples confirmed that the pattern of compliance found in the full sample also applied when responses from both parents in the case were compared.

Of interest, discordant reports on compliance were still high among former couples (40–44% of reports did not match). This could reflect the higher reported rate of negative relationships for all groups except liable fathers. Research with former couple dyads (Coley & Morris 2002; Mikelson 2008; Waller & Emory 2014) suggests that reports on aspects of post-separation parenting are more divergent where relationship quality is lower.

Non-response bias is frequently encountered with multi-actor surveys where permission is required to interview another party or contact information sought from the first person interviewed. This bias results in an over-representation of parents with positive relationships.

Respondents with a 'poor' relationship might not know contact details or

not want the other party to be interviewed. Likewise, a ‘good’ relationship may affect the response rate of the other party.

It is probable that the CSRS former couple data are less affected by this type of non-response bias (that is, parents with positive relationships) as participants did not know whether the other parent could be, or was, interviewed. This was particularly apparent in liable-mother dyads: in 54% of dyads one or both parents reported a negative relationship. Among these parents, discordant reports on compliance were higher (for parents with negative relationships ($n=17/31$ had discordant reports)).

7.5 Differences between liable mothers on child support payments and compliance

As in Chapter 6, intragroup differences for liable mothers were examined. Table 7.9 details the differences in expected amount; private agreement rather than assessment; collection method; and compliance. (Numbers are small in some subgroups and therefore observations are tentative).

Table 7.9 Differences between liable mothers: child support arrangements and compliance

	Less-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=79	Equal-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=50	More-time liable mothers <i>n</i>=31	Split- residence liable mothers <i>n</i>=25
Expected amount (mean)	\$2,556.57	\$2,443.04	\$1,166.86	\$4,499.62
SE, CI	\$449.79, CI \$1,674.78– \$3,438.35	\$732.59, CI \$1,006.84– \$3,879.25	\$171.91, CI \$829.84– \$1,503.87	\$993.43, CI \$2,552.06– \$6,447.18
<i>p</i> <.001				
Has Private Collect (%)	27.3	84.3	31.7	29.9
<i>p</i> =.014				
Has an agreement not an assessment (%)	11.6	33.1	17.6	6.1
<i>p</i> =.134				
Compliance (%)				
In full and on time	81.2	69.6	21.5	42.2
In full, not on time	9.7	6.9	3.8	39.5
On time, not in full	0.0	2.3	0.0	7.7
Neither in full nor on time	9.1	21.3	74.8	10.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.002				
Pays none of the expected amount (%)	1.1	21.3	63.2	6.2
<i>p</i> <.001				

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. Compliance excludes mothers with (i) another arrangement; (ii) always on time but missing expected and/or actual; (iii) full payment but did not know regularity; and (iv) missing regularity and expected and/or actual.

Less-time liable mothers predominantly had Child Support Collect and administrative assessments. They had the second highest liability, although still small (\$49 a week) considering they had the least overnights; slightly higher than equal-time mothers. This reflected their generally lower income. Less-time mothers had the highest compliance (81%) and almost all (99%) paid something.

In contrast, one-third of equal-time liable mothers had an agreement and 84% were Private Collect (compared with 27–32% of other liable mothers, $p=.014$) indicating more recent registration and positive relationships. Nonetheless, 21% paid none of the expected amount.

More-time liable mothers had the smallest mean liability but 75% paid neither in full nor on time and 63% paid none of the expected amount. This could suggest dissatisfaction with being liable when they had more nights with all their children than their former partner. (Satisfaction with the child support payment is explored in Chapter 8.)

Split-residence liable mothers had the highest mean liability. Less than half were compliant, with timeliness the main reason.

Liable mothers differed significantly on compliance and on whether they paid any of the expected amount. Liable mothers with the most time with their children (or to state this differently, those who matched the intensive mothering role more closely) were least likely to pay some of the expected amount. (This is explored further in Chapter 9.)

7.6 **Summary**

Liable mothers were significantly more likely to pay none of the expected amount than fathers and appear to have lower compliance than liable fathers, although this was not significantly lower overall. This difference was marginally significant for assessment cases and in Private Collect. Notably, liable mothers had a similar compliance rate whatever collection method was in place.

When all four groups of parents were compared, liable fathers reported the highest compliance followed by liable mothers, payee mothers, and then payee fathers.

This pattern also applied in the former couple sample with lower concordance on compliance in liable-mother than liable-father dyads (27% and 45%). It is noteworthy that liable mothers and payee fathers had slightly higher concordant reports on non-compliance (29%) than compliance.

Non-compliance does not necessarily mean absence of financial support. Other informal, voluntary financial assistance may be provided. Gender differences could affect patterns of in-kind contributions. This is explored in the next chapter (Chapter 8).

Chapter 8 In-kind contributions

In-kind contributions and direct spending on children when in each parents' household are similarly gendered and relevant to compliance. Shared-time mothers feel they meet most of the incidental expenses (Fineman 1991; Lacroix 2006; Markham & Coleman 2012; Tolmie, Elizabeth & Gavey 2010b), a responsibility also noted by nonresident mothers (Babcock 1998; Bemiller 2005; Herrerias 2008; Kielty 2006b; Maccoby et al. 1992). While sometimes recognised as in lieu of child support (Millward, Campo & Fehlberg 2011; Wolffs & Shallcross 2000), in-kind contributions are rarely included in child support research, underestimating mothers' financial contributions. Resident fathers acknowledge receipt of gifts, clothes and groceries significantly more frequently than resident mothers: 70% compared with 58% (Grall 2011).

This chapter is structured as follows. First, reports of in-kind contributions (i) made by liable parents; (ii) received by payees; and (iii) paid in the former couples dyads are compared. Second, a flexible measure of compliance ('soft' compliance) that includes in-kind contributions, agreed lower payments and other arrangements is discussed. Finally, satisfaction with child support and fairness for liable parents are compared, and then for liable mothers with different parenting arrangements, to provide a comprehensive picture of financial arrangements and parental satisfaction.

As with the previous results chapters, comparisons involve cross-tabulations and comparisons of means for the liable parent subgroup (Section 8.1.1–8.1.3 & 8.2.1), for the liable parents and payee subgroup (Section 8.1.4 & 8.2.2) and for the liable mother subgroup (Section 8.3.1). Once again because of the complex survey data, the statistical testing for the cross-tabulations produces an F-transformed Rao-Scott chi-squared test statistic as a default (Heeringa, West & Berglund 2010: 167)¹¹⁷ and the *test* command run post-estimation produces an adjusted Wald Test

¹¹⁷ This is a design-adjusted form of the Pearson Chi-Squared Test with a second-order design correction incorporated.

and an F-Ratio to show whether the means are statistically equivalent or not (UCLA Statistical Consulting Group n.d.). Exact p -values are reported in the text and tables.¹¹⁸ Significant differences at $p < .05$ are noted. All data are weighted using the design and response weights developed to be representative of the Scheme active caseload. Numbers reported in the text and tables are unweighted. Methodology used for the comparisons of the former partner dyads (Section 8.1.5 and 8.2.3) varies from this approach and is detailed further in the relevant sections on in-kind contributions and ‘soft’ compliance.

8.1.1 ***Prescribed in-kind items***

As detailed in Section 4.4.2, payment for prescribed items such as school fees, essential medical expenses and the payee’s housing costs can be credited for up to 30% of the liability without payee agreement in Child Support Collect cases (and in full if agreed). Further, in-kind is common in Private Collect.

Around half of liable parents (51% mothers and 56% fathers) made an in-kind contribution under one or more of the prescribed categories. Amounts paid did not differ significantly (mean=\$4,806 mothers and \$3,188 fathers, $p = .115$).¹¹⁹ As Table 8.1 indicates, childcare fees were the least paid (3% of parents) and essential medical or dental expenses the most (42% of mothers and 32% fathers). School expenses were also common (31–37% parents). There were no significant differences between liable mothers and liable fathers under any of these categories of in-kind contributions.

¹¹⁸ P -values below .001 are reported as $p < .001$.

¹¹⁹ The range for payments was quite wide: \$50–\$40,000 for liable mothers and \$30–\$100,000 for liable fathers. The median amount paid by liable mothers was \$2,500 and liable fathers \$1,000.

Table 8.1 Liable parents: in-kind contributions for prescribed items

	Liable mothers n=151	Liable fathers n=1,596
In-kind payment type¹		
Childcare fees (%)	2.6	2.8
Pre-school or school fees (%)	35.2	31.3
Uniforms or books (%)	37.2	36.4
Essential medical or dental expenses (%)	41.5	31.8
Payee's share of rent, mortgage or utilities (%)	14.7	9.8
Payee's motor vehicle costs (%)	15.1	10.4
Any item on the prescribed list (%)		
Yes	51.0	56.0
No	49.0	44.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.546		
Amount paid (mean)²	\$4,805.96	\$3,187.57
SE, CI	\$980.05, CI \$2,884–\$6,727.40	\$301.10, CI \$2,597.24–\$3,777.90
<i>p</i> =.115		
Payment made by agreement (%)	52.1	73.9
Yes	52.1	73.9
No	47.9	26.1
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.009		
In-kind payment partially or fully replaced cash child support (%)		
Yes	23.5	13.3
No	76.5	86.7
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.154		

Notes: Data are weighted. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. Excludes parents who were not asked about in-kind contributions. 1. Multiple responses allowed. 2. Mean amount excludes 3 liable fathers who reported paying for a prescribed item but reported the amount paid as \$0.

8.1.1.1 Agreement to pay in-kind

Liable parents who made one of these payments were asked if it was instead of regular child support (fully or in part) and whether they and the other parent agreed. A minority of liable parents reported that it

replaced regular child support in full or part (12% mothers and 7% fathers). However, liable mothers were significantly less likely to say the in-kind payment was by agreement (52% compared with 74% fathers, $p=.009$).¹²⁰

8.1.2 ***Anything else paid***

As well as prescribed items, parents were asked if they currently paid for anything else for their child such as clothing, computer, mobile phone costs, hobbies or sports equipment. As indicated in Table 8.2, more liable parents reported that they paid for something else than for prescribed items (83% mothers and 74% fathers, mean=\$3,026 mothers and mean=\$1,888 fathers).

Again, more fathers said this was by agreement (23% compared with 13% mothers), but this was nonsignificant. Payment could replace child support by agreement, particularly in Private Collect. Respondents were not asked about this, potentially underestimating agreed contributions in lieu of child support.

¹²⁰ Based on these responses, 6% of mothers were eligible for the 30% prescribed payment credit (compared with 1% fathers). This means that they made a payment under one or more of these categories and the payee did not agree that it was for child support. This was partly because more liable mothers had a Child Support Collect case than liable fathers and liable mothers were less likely to report that the prescribed item was paid by agreement. Whether they actually applied for credit for a prescribed payment is not known.

Table 8.2 Liable parents: pays for anything else in kind

	Liable mothers n=151	Liable fathers n=1,589
Pays for anything else (%)		
Yes	83.1	74.0
No	16.9	26.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.240		
Amount paid (mean)	\$3,025.53	\$1,888.47
SE, CI	\$1,147.35 \$776.11– \$5,274.94	\$116.25 \$1,660.55– \$2,116.38
<i>p</i> =.324		
Who decided (%)		
Liable parent	74.5	70.7
Other parent	9.0	5.1
Parents agreed	13.2	23.1
Child	3.3	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.144		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. Excludes parents who were not asked about in-kind payments.

8.1.3 *In-kind payments and compliance*

Most liable parents (89% mothers and 82% fathers) made an in-kind contribution, either for a prescribed item or something else. All liable mothers who did not pay in full paid in-kind compared with 67% of liable fathers.

8.1.4 *In-kind contributions for liable parents and payees*

As with compliance, reports of the four groups (liable mothers, liable fathers, payee mothers and payee fathers) on in-kind payments were compared. As Table 8.3 indicates, payees were less likely than liable parents to report that an in-kind contribution was made. In contrast to compliance, the group with the lowest reports was payee mothers.¹²¹ Overall 89% of liable mothers and 82% of liable fathers reported that they contributed something in-kind. In contrast, 55% of payee fathers and 50% of payee mothers reported that they received something in-kind. However, one category does warrant attention. Liable mothers' reports of

¹²¹ Payee mothers were significantly less likely to report receiving a prescribed item (29% compared with 44% of payee fathers, *p*=.013). Payee mothers also had lower reports of anything else paid (33% and 48%, *p*=.484) and any in-kind contribution (50% and 55%, *p*=.465), but the latter two were nonsignificant.

prescribed items more closely matched payee fathers' reports (51% and 44%, $p=.498$) while liable fathers' and payee mothers' reports differed significantly (56% compared with 29%, $p<.001$).¹²² Prescribed items are probably more obvious (and thus memorable) when paid compared with payment for other things such as presents, pocket money or items that may be bought and kept at the liable parent's home. Nonetheless, payee mothers' and liable fathers' reports did differ significantly in the CSRS and this matched previous research on differing reports (see, for example, Coley & Morris 2002; Seltzer & Brandreth 1994). However, these findings relate to independent samples of parents. Differences in reports of payment and receipt of in-kind contributions are explored further in the former couple subsample in Section 8.1.5.

**Table 8.3 Liable parents and payees:
in-kind contributions**

	Liabile mothers n=149	Liabile fathers n=1,589	Payee mothers n=1,957	Payee fathers n=153
Liabile parent paid for a prescribed item (%) <i>p<.001</i>	51.0	56.0	29.3	44.2
Liabile parent paid for something else (%) <i>p<.001</i>	83.1	74.0	38.1	42.6
Liabile parent made any in- kind contribution (%) <i>p<.001</i>	88.7	81.9	50.3	55.0

Notes: Data are weighted. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. Excludes parents who were not asked about in-kind contributions. Significant differences between liable fathers and payee mothers ($p<.001$). Significant differences between liable mothers and payee fathers for something else ($p<.001$) and any in-kind contribution ($p=.004$) but no difference for prescribed items ($p=.498$).

¹²² These findings related to independent samples of parents. Differences in reports of payment and receipt of in-kind contributions are explored further in the former couple subsample in Section 8.1.5.

8.1.5 ***Prescribed in-kind payments and anything else paid in the former couple sample***

The discussion above focused on reports of in-kind contributions for the sample overall. Again, dyadic data provide further insight. As with Section 7.4, data from former partners for relevant questions were extracted and reproduced in spreadsheet format so that responses from both parents could be examined side-by-side and compared for level of concordance. However, unlike the presentation of data on payments and compliance, data on in-kind contributions were further analysed to allow testing of comparisons between concordance in the liable-mother and liable-father dyads. To do this, several variables were created representing concordance or discordance based on the responses by former partners. Variables were then compared via cross-tabulation and Pearson Chi-squared test statistic produced. Mean amounts paid were not tested as the substantial “don’t know” response rate precluded meaningful analysis.

As indicated in Table 8.4, concordance of reports that a prescribed item was made was significantly higher in liable mother than liable-father dyads (51% compared with 31%, $p=.006$). The mean amount paid in liable-mother dyads (\$4,873 and \$4,960) was substantial, and somewhat higher than reported in liable-father dyads (\$3,626 and \$2,559), suggesting that the contribution was meaningful and acknowledged. Median amounts were also higher in the liable-mother dyads, with payee fathers reporting the highest median amount paid. Further, reports on payment of prescribed items were less discordant—78% of former partners in the liable mother dyads gave the same response—than the responses on compliance.

Concordance of reports on anything else paid was higher in liable-mother dyads (51% compared with 38% in liable-father dyads), although this difference did not reach significance. Mean and median amount reported paid were lower for anything else than for prescribed payments, particularly for payees. Again, liable mothers reported the highest mean amount paid.

Overall former partners in the liable-mother dyads were marginally more likely to both report that some contribution was made in-kind than in the liable father dyads (64% and 52%, $p=.066$).

Table 8.4 Liable-mother and liable-father dyads: concordance on reports of in-kind contributions

	<div> <div> Liable-mother dyads</div> <div>n=61</div> </div>	<div> <div> Liable-father dyads</div> <div>n=750</div> </div>
Prescribed items (%)		
Both former partners reported paid	50.8	31.3
Both former partners reported not paid	27.9	33.1
Discordant reports	21.3	35.6
Total	100.0	100.0
$p=.006$		
Amount paid (mean)		
Liable parent	\$4,873.39	\$3,643.56
Payee	\$4,960.44	\$2,559.45
Amount paid (median)		
Liable parent	\$2,500	\$1,500
Payee	\$2,600	\$720
Anything else paid (%)		
Both former partners reported paid	50.9	38.4
Both former partners reported not paid	14.0	15.7
Discordant reports	35.1	46.0
Total	100.0	100.0
$p=.167$		
Amount paid (mean)		
Liable parent	\$3,701.52	\$2,636.23
Payee	\$617.27	\$684.17
Amount paid (median)		
Liable parent	\$1,500	\$1,500
Payee	\$640	\$650
Liable parent made any in kind contribution: Both former partners reported paid (%)	64.4	52.0
$p=.066$		

Notes: Data are unweighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. Only includes responses where both parents were asked.

8.1.6 Discussion

The nonresident mother literature highlights that the majority of mothers paid something in-kind (Herrerias 2008; Kielty 2006b; Wolffs &

Shallcross 2000). The data above confirm this pattern of in-kind support for liable mother-cases based on reports from liable mothers (89% contributed something) and on reports from former partners in the liable mother dyads where in almost two-in-three (64%) of cases both reported that something was provided.

Research with minority-time fathers indicates that in-kind payments have symbolic meaning, being ‘earmarked for children only’ and ‘render[ing] their status as giver visible’ (Bradshaw et al. 1999: 217). In contrast, Greif (1997b) suggested that for nonresident mothers in-kind payments indicate that she knows best what the child needs. Until the present study, this issue has not been investigated in Australia for liable mothers.

Liable mothers were significantly less likely than liable fathers to contribute towards prescribed items by agreement than unilaterally. (This applied to anything else paid, although this did not reach significance.) Liable mothers’ higher unilateral purchases, especially for prescribed items, could suggest a gendered response relating to the mother role and the requirement to be child-focused. Prescribed items could be classified as more of an essential or routine nature than those covered under the ‘anything else’ catch-all question. Payment of a prescribed item may reflect an identification of children’s needs and thus the purchases made without discussion with the other parent. Alternatively, this could reflect that mothers (whether liable or not) had more say in decision-making for education and routine medical or dental care¹²³ than liable fathers and took responsibility for these expenses.

Data in Section 8.1.3 are consistent with previous findings for liable fathers (generally based on resident mothers' reports, see for example, Bell, Kazimirski & La Valle 2006; Qu & Weston 2013; Teachman 1991;

¹²³ Parental decision-making was not covered in the CSRS at Time 0 but it was at T1. Unpublished analysis of responses about parental decision-making indicate that liable mothers were significantly more likely to be the main decision-maker for health and education than liable fathers: 51% compared with 6% and 38% compared with 4%. (author’s calculations)

Zubrick et al. 2008) that in-kind contributions are significantly more likely to be additional to cash child support. The results above indicate that, regardless of whether the expected child support was paid in full, most liable mothers provided in-kind support. Other research with shared-time mothers in New Zealand (Tolmie, Elizabeth & Gavey 2010a) highlighted that mothers report being the ‘bottom-line parent’ who is responsible for organising and paying for medical and dental expenses. (See also Lacroix 2006.) This appears to be confirmed here for liable mothers regardless of parenting time or compliance.

The CSRS data are the first Australian data comparing payee fathers’ and liable mothers’ reports on in-kind contributions. None thus far have compared the four groups using dyadic data. The CSRS data show considerable concordance on reports of former partners about in-kind payment for liable mothers. Further, payee fathers in the liable-mother dyads more often reported in-kind contributions than in the payee father group overall: 64% concordant reports of any in-kind contribution. When both former partners were asked, 51% of payee fathers and liable mothers both said a payment was made compared with 44% for a prescribed item and 38% for anything else in the full sample of payee fathers.

Dyadic data reveal significantly higher concordance among former partners in the liable-mother dyads than in the liable-father dyads that an in-kind payment of a prescribed item was paid.¹²⁴ These are the additional costs such as school fees and medical expenses that research indicates payee mothers want their former partner to pay but according to their reports rarely do (see, for example, Qu & Weston 2013 where less than 20% of payee mothers received help with medical costs, childcare or school fees). Notably, the higher concordance among liable-mother dyads confirms that these are more often paid and acknowledged by payee fathers.

¹²⁴ Concordant reports of other (non-prescribed) in-kind contributions were higher among liable mothers and payee fathers than in the liable-father dyads, although this latter comparison was not statistically significant. Whether any in kind contribution was marginally different.

8.2 ‘Soft’ compliance

To extend understanding of compliance, this section focuses on a broader measure that includes other financial contributions and negotiated agreements between parents. This measure (hereafter ‘soft’ compliance) was developed by Vnuk for the compliance study of Smyth, Vnuk, Rodgers and Son (2014). It takes into account that financial responsibilities can be met by other mutually acceptable arrangements such as agreed lower (or no) payment, or allocation of the costs of the children between parents that may not match the formal administrative assessment. The present study uses a modified measure that includes in-kind contributions and all payments less than expected by agreement regardless of timeliness.

‘Soft’ compliance was met when the payment was:

- mostly on time and 100% or more was paid; or
- always on time and 90–99% of the liability was paid; or
- made in-kind from the prescribed payment list *and* the payment was intended to fully or partly replace child support (hereafter ‘in-kind payment’); or
- less than expected *and* agreed to (if the payee) or the former partner was reported to have agreed (if the liable parent); or
- replaced by another arrangement.

This classification system is hierarchical, with ‘100% and mostly’ and ‘90–99% and always paid on time’ given primacy because they could overlap with in-kind or agreed lower amount. Agreed in-kind payment was then considered. If none of these applied, then whether the lower amount paid was by agreement was determined. Parents with another arrangement were examined separately as the other categories were not relevant.

Using this broader definition, the largest group of liable parents moving to ‘soft’ compliance was those who paid 100% mostly on time. A small number of fathers but no mothers paid 90–99% of the liability always on time. A further 3% of mothers and 12% of fathers made an in-kind

payment in lieu of child support. Finally, 7–8% reported that the payee agreed to receive less than full payment; around half of those with a lower actual payment.¹²⁵ Mothers who paid less than expected or nothing by agreement had equal-time or split-residence. No association with parenting time was noted for liable fathers who all reported paying some of the expected amount.

As Table 8.5 shows, of those liable parents deemed non-compliant under the ‘in full and on time’ measure (see Table 7.5) 48% of mothers and 41% of fathers were not ‘soft’ compliant either.

Table 8.5 ‘Soft’ compliance for liable parents previously treated as ‘not in full and/or not on time’

	Liable mothers n=57	Liable fathers n=311
‘Soft’ compliance (%)		
100% and mostly	41.8	35.7
90–99% and always	0.0	4.2
In-kind payment agreed in lieu of child support	3.4	11.9
Agreed to difference	7.0	7.6
Not ‘soft’ compliance	47.8	40.7
Total	100.0	100.0
p=.664		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Includes three liable mothers and 11 liable fathers previously omitted because of missing data on expected or actual amount or regularity. ‘Agreed to difference’ includes payments made ‘sometimes’ to ‘never’ on time and regularity unknown.

Table 8.6 shows compliance including those who met the ‘soft’ compliance measure. As indicated below, 17% of liable mothers and 10% of liable fathers met neither compliance measure. Including liable parents who were ‘soft’ compliant did not change the level of statistical significance (comparisons on compliance and non-compliance were nonsignificant) although the difference between liable parents slightly narrowed.

¹²⁵The remaining liable mothers did not know or it was still being resolved. Liable fathers were divided between not agreed, did not know and still being resolved.

Table 8.6 Liable parents: compliance and ‘soft’ compliance

	Liable mothers n=149	Liable fathers n=1,507
Compliance or ‘soft’ compliance (%)		
In full and on time or ‘soft’ compliance	82.8	90.0
Neither	17.2	10.1
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> =.185		

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Excludes (i) parents with another arrangement and (ii) where compliance was unable to be determined because of missing data on regularity, expected or actual amounts or the amount varies. Includes three liable mothers and 11 liable fathers previously omitted because of missing data on expected or actual amount or regularity.

8.2.1 *Liable mothers with another arrangement*

Some parents (*n*=303) reported that cash child support payments had been replaced by another arrangement.¹²⁶ Data were collected on these ‘other arrangements’ to assist in understanding how child support works ‘on the ground’.¹²⁷ As noted above, parents with another arrangement were treated as ‘soft’ compliant. To provide some insight into this group, a detailed description of the type of arrangements and the cases covered for liable mothers follows. (While it is probable that details will not be identical in all aspects, the information below shares some common features of other arrangements of liable fathers, payee fathers and payee mothers who reported that cash child support was replaced.)

Liable mothers were twice as likely to report that they had another arrangement that replaced cash child support (12% compared with 6% liable fathers, *p*=.034). Their higher shared-time and split-residence suggest that another arrangement applied because expected amounts were small; the liable parent in the case was changeable; or views about which parent (if any) should pay differed from the assessment.

The remainder of this section details other arrangements reported by liable-mothers (*n*=24). Arrangements were generally informal and not

¹²⁶ This group comprised 24 liable mothers; 72 liable fathers; 87 payee mothers; 22 payee fathers; and 53 fathers and 45 mothers who were neither liable or a payee.

¹²⁷ This is one of the strengths of the CSRS—the inclusion of detailed questions about child support practices in a large dataset representative of the caseload.

influenced by the amount of any administrative assessment. Nonetheless, half ($n=12/24$) claimed that an assessment applied. Few arrangements were registered as an agreement with the Child Support Agency ($n=3/24$). The high proportion of private (informal) agreements could explain why nine parents did not know the expected amount or reported that it varies, and four reported that no payment was expected.

Some private agreements specified how the liability was paid, such as school fees or other expenses ($n=7/24$) indicating that in-kind payments were common. Other parents appeared to be ignoring the assessment and sorted things out completely between themselves. For those with shared-time or split-residence, expenses were also shared or split between parents, or no money changed hands ($n=11/24$). As expected, 83% were Private Collect.

For mothers with other arrangements the liability appears nominal. As mentioned, almost half shared expenses or no money was transferred. Several ($n=3/24$) described arrangements involving transfers in the opposite direction to their Child Support Agency-allocated liability. These private agreements could indicate a 'fairer' negotiated outcome than the formal assessment of financial responsibility they replaced. (Further details of these arrangements are shown in Appendix B, Table B7.)

All parents with another arrangement were treated as 'soft' compliant because a substantial minority had registered agreements and the remainder operated with an assessment in the background that could be enforced. Further, some informal agreements were essentially about the mode of payment in Private Collect cases. While important not to automatically assume that all arrangements financially benefitted the children, 82% of these mothers had a positive or distant relationship and those few with a negative relationship paid school fees, shared expenses or no money changed hands.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ The one mother who described the relationship with her former partner as fearful had a registered agreement where the father paid the school fees.

8.2.2 ***‘Soft’ compliance for liable parents and payees***

Table 8.7 shows compliance and ‘soft’ compliance for all liable parents and payees including those with another arrangement. The pattern mirrors the previous compliance rate (see Table 7.5). Under this broader measure 91% of liable fathers, 85% of liable mothers, 69% of payee mothers and 66% of payee fathers reported compliance or ‘soft’ compliance. In contrast, 77% of liable fathers, 64% of liable mothers, 45% of payee mothers and 39% of payee fathers reported compliance using the stricter measure of in full and on time.

**Table 8.7 Liable parents and payees:
compliance and ‘soft’ compliance**

	Liable mothers <i>n</i>=173	Liable fathers <i>n</i>=1,582	Payee mothers <i>n</i>=2,130	Payee fathers <i>n</i>=182
Compliance or ‘soft’ compliance (%)				
In full and on time or ‘soft’ compliance	85.1	90.6	68.7	66.1
Neither	14.9	9.4	31.3	33.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>p</i> <.001				

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Includes parents with another arrangement and those previously missing who meet the criteria for ‘soft’ compliance. Excludes one payee father with another arrangement where ‘soft’ compliance could not be determined. Differences were significant between liable mothers and payee fathers ($p=.021$) and between liable fathers and payee mothers ($p<.001$).

8.2.3 ***‘Soft’ compliance in the former couple sample***

Table 8.8 indicates the extent of concordance in the liable-mother and liable-father dyads on compliance and ‘soft’ compliance. As previously in the section covering former partner dyads and compliance (Section 7.4), no statistical testing is reported for the level of concordance of responses.

Table 8.8 Liable-mother and liable-father dyads: concordance on reports of compliance and ‘soft’ compliance

	Liable-mother dyads n=67	Liable-father dyads n=709
Former partners (%)		
Both former partners reported in full and on time or ‘soft’ compliance	64.2	71.4
Both former partners reported neither compliance or ‘soft’ compliance	4.5	11.6
Discordant reports	31.3	17.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Notes: Data are unweighted. Excludes 11 liable-mother dyads and 118 liable-father dyads where compliance cannot be determined for one or both parents.

As discussed previously, in 27% of liable-mother dyads and 45% of liable-father dyads both former partners reported that payments were made in full and on time (see Table 7.7). With ‘soft’ compliance including other arrangements, the level of concordance increased to 64% for liable-mother dyads and 71% for liable-father dyads. Of interest, the concordance on non-compliance found previously in the liable-mother dyads (that is, slightly higher than concordance on compliance) disappeared once ‘soft’ compliance was considered. Further analysis revealed that most ($n=12/16$) former couple liable mothers and payee fathers who both reported non-compliance using the stricter measure had discordant responses once a more flexible measure of ‘soft’ compliance was used.

8.3 Satisfaction and fairness of child support payment

This section looks at satisfaction and fairness. Parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the overall amount of child support they paid, or the way child support balances out if not currently paying, and fairness for the child, themselves, former partner and, if applicable, current partner. This area is important to examine to see if views differ between liable parents (and in the latter part of this section, among liable mothers with different parenting arrangements). Differences between liable parents on expected amount and parenting time suggest that fairness and satisfaction might also differ.

Nonetheless, there were no significant differences between liable parents on mean satisfaction or for child and personal fairness. Although differences in mean fairness for their former partner approached significance (mean=8.58/10 mothers compared with 8.18 fathers, $p=.093$), total fairness was the same (mean=17.95).¹²⁹ Among the subgroup of repartnered parents, liable fathers had a lower score for fairness for their current partner (mean=4.18 compared with 6.01 for mothers, $p=.008$). (See Appendix B, Table B8 for details).

8.3.1 ***Differences between liable mothers: in-kind, ‘soft’ compliance and fairness***

Using the typology of liable mothers outlined in Chapter 6, comparisons were made on in-kind contributions, ‘soft’ compliance and satisfaction/fairness. As indicated in Table 8.9 no significant differences were found on frequency of in-kind contributions. This was expected as mothers in three of the four liable mother types have at least one child mainly in their household. All more-time and equal-time liable mothers made an in-kind contribution as did 98% of liable mothers with split-residence. In-kind contributions were also made by 82% of less-time mothers.

In contrast, significant differences were found between liable mothers for ‘soft’ compliance. Using the typology detailed in Chapter 6, less-time liable mothers had the highest rate: 90% were compliant or ‘soft’ compliant, followed by equal-time liable mothers (87%) and split-residence mothers (85%). More-time liable mothers had the lowest rate at 47%. This was the same pattern as found for overall compliance and follows the ‘intensity’ of the mother role.

Differences were also apparent for levels of satisfaction and personal fairness between liable mothers.¹³⁰ Reflecting the gender lens applied to these analyses, significant differences on mean satisfaction and fairness

¹²⁹ A total score was calculated for parents who had valid responses on fairness for themselves, the child and their former partner ($n=156$ mothers and $n=1,363$ fathers).

¹³⁰ Fairness for the child was also low (2.12–5.75, $p=.005$) and in the same direction as personal fairness. Fairness for former partner was high regardless of parenting arrangements (8.27–9.27, $p=.314$). Overall fairness scores ($n=156$) followed the same pattern as personal fairness ($p=.010$).

between the four groups of liable mothers were found, with both trending downwards as their parenting time increased. Differences were not driven by parental relationship quality: those comparisons were nonsignificant. In contrast, liable fathers' satisfaction and personal fairness did not differ significantly by parenting time (data not shown).

Table 8.9 Differences between liable mothers: in-kind contributions, ‘soft’ compliance, satisfaction and fairness of child support payment

	Less-time liable mothers n=79	Equal-time liable mothers n=50	More-time liable mothers n=31	Split- residence liable mothers n=25
Made any in-kind contribution (%)	82.0	100.0	100.0	97.7
<i>p</i> =.163				
Compliance or ‘soft’ compliance (%)	90.0	87.0	47/4	89.9
<i>p</i> =.023				
Satisfaction with amount of child support paid (0=totally dissatisfied, 10=totally satisfied) (mean)	6.22	5.03	3.45	3.45
SE, CI	0.47, CI 5.30–7.13	0.83, CI 3.40–6.65	0.55, CI 2.37–4.54	0.85, CI 1.78–5.11
<i>p</i> =.001				
Fairness of child support arrangement for liable mother (0=totally unfair, 10=totally fair) (mean)	5.48	4.45	2.89	3.47
SE, CI	0.51, CI 4.47–6.49	0.93, CI 2.62–6.28	0.49, CI 1.93–3.85	0.78, CI 1.95–5.00
<i>p</i> =.003				

Notes: Data are weighted. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data.

Less-time liable mothers had the highest satisfaction (mean=6.22/10 compared with 3.45–5.03) and fairness scores (mean=5.48 compared with 2.89–4.45), almost double that of more-time liable mothers.

Although equal-time liable mothers had the second highest fairness score, it was below mid-point (mean=4.45) and could point to issues with being the liable parent for these mothers. More-time liable mothers had

low satisfaction and personal fairness scores (and a very low score for fairness for the child, mean=2.12, data not shown). Split-residence liable mothers had the same low mean satisfaction score as more-time liable mothers, and reported a low personal fairness score. These low scores could reflect that split-residence liable mothers were required to pay when at least one child was mainly with them.

8.4 **Summary**

Most (89%) liable mothers whether compliant or not provided in-kind support, as did all mothers who did not pay in full. In contrast, in-kind support was significantly higher for compliant liable fathers than non-compliant fathers. Put simply, for liable fathers, in-kind support tended to accompany regular child support payment.

Payee fathers' reports supported those of liable mothers, with significantly higher concordance on reports of prescribed in-kind items and marginally significant concordance levels for overall in-kind contributions than in liable-father dyads. Overall 64% of former partners in the liable-mother dyads both reported that an in-kind contribution was made. Of note, half (51%) of former partners in the liable-mother dyads both reported that a prescribed item such as school fees or medical expenses were paid. Concordant reports among liable-father dyads were significantly lower at 31%. These type of expenses tend to be seen by payees as routine but often seen by liable fathers in the previous research as already covered by their child support and if paid, a 'top-up' to child support (see, for example, Hawthorne 2005). Gender role may be relevant here with liable mothers identifying and meeting children's needs as part of the mother role—and payee fathers more often acknowledging this contribution.

Overall, 85% of liable mothers and 66% of payee fathers were compliant using the more flexible 'soft' compliance measure, up from 64% and 39% under the stricter definition. Among liable-mother dyads 27% of former partners both reported that the liable mother was compliant. With 'soft' compliance, this increased to 64% including those with another arrangement.

While liable mothers and liable fathers had similar views on satisfaction and fairness of the child support paid or expected, within the liable mother subgroup mothers' satisfaction and fairness decreased as their parenting-time increased. This suggests that child support payment may be less problematic for mothers with less time.

The following chapter (Chapter 9) explores possible reasons for non-compliance for liable mothers.

Chapter 9 Why are some liable mothers non-compliant?

This chapter addresses the third research question: “What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?” The analytic approach adopted in the present study is to model the odds of non-compliance defined as not in full and/or not on time. To restate, non-compliance comprises late payments, partial payments and payment of none of the expected amount.

First, the theoretical approach underpinning the analyses in this chapter is outlined. Second, the odds of non-compliance for a range of variables for liable mothers are detailed. Third, a model identifying the key factors associated with non-compliance for liable mothers is developed.

Reference is made where relevant to previous research findings on factors associated with non-compliance in liable-father cases to determine to what extent, if any, these apply to liable mothers.

9.1 Theoretical approach

Previous research (Lyngstad 2010; Stewart 1999b, 2010) found that there were gender differences in child support payment between nonresident mothers and nonresident fathers and that traditional gender roles partly explained mothers’ lower payments. However, these findings applied to *nonresident* parents, and did not explicitly address non-compliance.

The meaning of money may be different in separated families where ‘conventional, gendered parenting roles are abandoned, applied less strictly or reversed’ (Bakker & Mulder 2013: 852). Financial responsibilities are easier to define where caretaking roles are clearly reversed than for other permutations of sharing time.

Using a feminist theoretical approach, the present study tests whether mothers’ compliance behaviour is related to the gendered norms of parenting where mothering is seen as being primarily associated with caregiving as the ‘pre-eminent cultural ideology of motherhood that is powerful, pervasive and persistent’ (Arendell 1999: 2).

As detailed in Chapter 7, liable mothers had lower compliance than liable fathers, with marginally significant differences for Private Collect and assessment cases. Mothers were significantly more likely to pay neither in full nor on time than liable fathers, and to pay none of the liability.¹³¹ In addition, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, liable parents had different patterns of parenting time. Mothers were less likely to never spend time with the focal child and more likely to have equal-time or more with at least one of their children. Intragroup differences in liable mothers' compliance (see Section 7.5) indicate that gender behavioural norms about mothering may be relevant to non-compliance. This chapter tests this proposition.

Australian researchers have noted the nexus between child support and parenting time when the mother is the payee (Fehlberg & Smyth 2000; Funder 1993; Hawthorne 2005) but whether there is a relationship between time and money for liable mothers is untested. In one rare Australian study, Smyth and Ferro (2002) noted that money and time might be unrelated and that minority-time mothers remain involved regardless of child support. In their study, majority-time fathers who had not repartnered and reported that they received child support mainly had arrangements where the mother had some overnights. Smyth and Ferro suggested that the better financial situation of these fathers might be relevant. Whether this finding represented substitution of time for money or that mothers with more nights had no liability was not explored.

In this chapter, logistic regression is used to test whether factors with significantly higher odds of non-compliance relate to the social expectations of the gendered role of mother as present, that is 'emotional and physical availability' (Walzer 2008: 8).

¹³¹ Although different relationships have been found for full payment, partial payment and none of the expected amount paid in liable-father cases (Losoncz 2008; Meyer & Bartfeld 1998), numbers were too small to test with non-compliant liable mothers.

9.2 Odds of non-compliance for liable mothers

This section examines bivariate relationships between each potential factor and the probability of the liable mother being non-compliant logistic regression analyses as a first step in building a logistic regression model identifying the key predictors of non-compliance for liable mothers.

For ease of reference it is useful to restate the way compliance is operationalised in the present study. To recap, compliance is payment of the full amount of the liability always on time.¹³² As explained previously, the compliance measure is only applicable where the expected amount of child support is more than \$0.

The analyses use data from 146 liable mothers with valid compliance information. Factors to be assessed rely on the research with liable-father cases¹³³ and the limited research with minority-time mothers detailed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. These relate to socio-demographic characteristics; income; parenting time; parental relationship quality; conflict; personal wellbeing; and fairness of the liability.

This analysis produces odds ratios (and confidence intervals at the 95% level), which assess whether the probability of non-compliance is the same for two groups (for example, mothers with and without resident children). Use of the Stata *svy* command produces results that report a model *F* test and *t* statistics that take into account the survey design degrees of freedom to compute *p*-values (Statacorp 2015). Variables with significant odds of non-compliance are discussed. As the numbers of liable mothers with valid information to determine compliance (*n*=146), and those reporting non-compliance (*n*=54), are only of moderate size,

¹³² Omitted from the analytic sample for testing the odds of non-compliance are liable mothers who (i) always paid on time but missing expected and/or actual; (iii) paid in full but did not know regularity; (iv) had missing regularity and expected and/or actual; and (v) had another arrangement.

¹³³ For example, Meyer and Bartfeld (1998) list (i) ability to pay; (ii) economic needs of the payee; (iii) the relationship between parents and between the parent and the child; and (iv) the stringency of the enforcement system. See also the Child Support Agency Compliance Program (Child Support Agency 2010).

variables that approached significance are discussed where relevant. Of note, some variables had substantially higher or lower odds of non-compliance but nonetheless were not statistically significant. Some factors associated with non-compliance could be overlooked because of the modest sample size (Type II error) and some significant differences could disappear once the multivariate analyses are undertaken.

Seven broad categories were examined covering:

- liability and collection method (Section 9.2.1)
- current circumstances (Section 9.2.2)
- former relationship (Section 9.2.3)
- parenting time (Section 9.2.4)
- family dynamics (Section 9.2.5)
- personal wellbeing (Section 9.2.6)
- satisfaction and fairness of child support payment (Section 9.2.7)

9.2.1 ***Liability and collection method***

Table 9.1 shows the odds of non-compliance by liability and collection method. Previous Australian research with parents in liable-father cases found that the larger the liability, the higher the compliance (Weston 2010). However, no statistically significant odds were found by expected amount, method of liability calculation, or collection method for liable mothers. Odds were lower (odds 0.22, $p=.183$) for mothers with a private or registered agreement for child support rather than an administrative assessment. However, the number of mothers with an agreement even when private and registered agreements were combined was small. Most (92%) liable mothers with valid compliance information had an administrative assessment. When the two very small groups of mothers with agreements were examined separately, it became apparent that mothers with a registered agreement ($n=8$) had lower but non-significant odds of non-compliance (odds 0.76, $p=.811$, data not shown) but *all* mothers with a private agreement ($n=8$) were compliant. These differences were concealed by combining the two agreement groups together, that is, conceptual lumping.

Table 9.1 Liable mothers: odds of non-compliance related to the liability

Factor	Odds of being non-compliant (where reference group odds=1)	Odds	SE	95% conf. interval	t	p>t
Assessment or private/registered agreement (ref: assessment) Collection method (ref: Private Collect) Expected annual child support	agreement	0.22	0.25	0.03–2.03	–1.33	p=.183
	Child Support Collect	1.13	0.72	0.32–3.97	0.19	p=.849
	For each \$10 increase in annual liability	1.00	0.00	0.999–1.001	0.59	p=.553

Notes: Data are weighted. Odds of 1.00 may not equal exactly 1.00 due to rounding. n=146 mothers. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data.

9.2.2 **Socio-demographic circumstances**

Table 9.2 details the odds of non-compliance for socio-demographic factors.

Table 9.2 Liable mothers: odds of non-compliance related to socio-demographic circumstances

Factor	Odds of being non-compliant (where reference group odds=1)	Odds	SE	95% conf. interval	t	p>t
Household composition (ref: alone or only with other adults)	resident children and no partner	1.63	1.27	0.35–7.51	0.63	<i>p</i> =.532
	partner and no resident children	0.36	0.30	0.07–1.83	–1.23	<i>p</i> =.218
	partner and resident children	1.95	1.88	0.29–12.93	0.69	<i>p</i> =.490
Has a resident child (ref: no resident child)	resident child	2.95	1.87	0.85–10.23	1.71	<i>p</i> =.088
Biological children from more than one relationship¹ (ref: former relationship children only)	children from more than one relationship	0.14	0.10	0.06–0.58	–2.73	<i>p</i> =.006
Has degree or higher qualification (ref: no)	yes	0.70	0.43	0.21–2.31	–0.59	<i>p</i> =.553
Hours worked per week	For each additional hour	1.02	0.02	0.99–1.06	1.46	<i>p</i> =.146
Main income source (ref: salary or wages)	self-employment or other	10.88	10.06	1.77–66.68	2.58	<i>p</i> =.010
	government payment	0.18	0.16	0.03–0.999	–1.96	<i>p</i> =.050
Net annual personal income	For each \$100 increase in income	1.00	0.00	0.998–1.002	0.21	<i>p</i> =.830

Factor	Odds of being non-compliant (where reference group odds=1)	Odds	SE	95% conf. interval	t	p>t
Net annual household income	For each \$100 increase in income	1.00	0.00	0.998–1.001	–0.16	<i>p</i> =.874
Self-assessed poor financial circumstances (ref: just getting along or better)	poor or very poor	2.34	1.65	0.59–9.31	1.20	<i>p</i> =.229
Experienced hardship in last 12 months (ref: no)	yes	0.52	0.33	0.15–1.83	–1.03	<i>p</i> =.305

Notes: Data are weighted. Odds of 1.00 may not equal exactly 1.00 due to rounding. *n*=146 mothers. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. 1. Biological children include adopted children but not stepchildren.

Household composition was not significant. However, having a child in the household marginally increased the odds of non-compliance with the presence of a resident child almost tripling the odds of being non-compliant (odds 2.95, *p*=.088). Further, mothers with children from more than one previous relationship (*n*=22) had significantly lower odds than those with former relationship children only.

Contrary to expectations based on the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 (see, for example, Babcock 1998; Bemiller 2005; Greif 1986; Herrerias 1995; McMurray 1992; Wolffs & Shallcross 2000), low capacity to pay did not appear relevant. Odds of non-compliance did not differ significantly as hours of work increased (odds 1.02, *p*=.146) nor as income increased.¹³⁴ However, liable mothers receiving government payments (*n*=12) had significantly lower odds of non-compliance than those receiving salary or wages (odds 0.18, *p*=.050). This could be

¹³⁴ Both net annual personal income and net annual household income significantly decreased the odds of non-compliance for liable fathers for each \$100 increase in income.

because all these mothers had a Child Support Collect case and deductions from their government payments for child support were routinely put in place.

In contrast, mothers whose main income was self-employment or other non-wage source ($n=11$) had significantly higher odds of being non-compliant than mothers whose main income was salary and wages (odds 10.88, $p=.010$), consistent with previous research with liable fathers (Atkinson & McKay 2005; Boden & Corden 1998; Murray Woods and Associates 1997). This demonstrates hard to enforce compliance among those with irregular, and here quite low, income.

9.2.3 ***Former relationship***

Research with liable-father cases suggests that factors measuring relationship commitment such as prior marital status and years together were factors associated with compliance in liable-father cases (Atkinson & McKay 2005; Losoncz 2007). As Table 9.3 indicates, only years separated had increased odds of non-compliance and these were marginally higher (odds 1.17, $p=.069$). This finding could be related to a reduction in compliance as time passes but data were not collected about how long parents had been liable and other explanations could apply.

Odds were significantly higher if the liable mother reported that her former partner had repartnered where known (odds 3.48, $p=.047$). Once new or stepchildren were considered odds were marginally higher where their former partner had repartnered and had no new or stepchild. However, this four-level variable was nonsignificant overall. This may be because of lack of statistical power.

Table 9.3 Liable mothers: odds of non-compliance related to the former relationship

Factor	Odds of being non-compliant (where reference group odds=1)	Odds	SE	95% conf. interval	t	p>t
Previously married (ref: yes)	no	1.51	1.30	0.28–8.13	0.48	<i>p</i> =.630
Years together	For each additional year	0.97	0.05	0.88–1.07	–0.64	<i>p</i> =.522
Number of former relationship children	For each additional child	1.40	0.52	0.67–2.91	0.90	<i>p</i> =.371
Age of youngest child	For each additional year	1.04	0.08	0.90–1.21	0.54	<i>p</i> =.590
Years separated	For each additional year	1.17	0.10	0.99–1.38	1.82	<i>p</i> =.069
Employment of former partner (ref: in paid employment)	self-employed	0.65	0.53	0.13–3.26	–0.53	<i>p</i> =.598
	not in paid employment	1.84	1.46	0.39–8.67	0.77	<i>p</i> =.439
	don't know	2.73	2.96	0.33–22.76	0.93	<i>p</i> =.353
Former partner repartnered¹ (ref: no)	yes	3.48	2.18	1.01–11.91	1.98	<i>p</i> =.047
Former partner repartnered with a new/stepchild (ref: not repartnered)²	repartnered and no new/stepchild	5.52	5.25	0.86–35.57	1.80	<i>p</i> =.072
	repartnered and a new/stepchild	2.63	1.70	0.74–9.34	1.50	<i>p</i> =.134
	don't know	5.08	5.06	0.72–35.90	1.63	<i>p</i> =.104

Notes: Data are weighted. *n*=146 mothers. Numbers for some variables may be less due to missing data. 1. 'Don't know' responses (*n*=15) are treated as missing. Odds were the same when 'don't know' was included as a discrete category.

9.2.4 ***Parenting time***

Recent Australian research indicates a positive relationship between parenting-time and liable fathers' compliance (Qu & Weston 2013; Qu et al. 2014) with fathers who rarely spent time with their child having the lowest compliance. In contrast, *more* time was related to non-compliance for liable mothers regardless of how the time was measured.

As indicated in Table 9.4, odds of non-compliance increased with each additional night the focal child spent with the mother. Comparisons using original Scheme categories are not reported as this produced subgroups too small for valid comparisons.¹³⁵ Instead, testing using a dichotomous variable (less than one night a week/one night a week or more) revealed that liable mothers who had at least one overnight a week with the focal child were six times more likely to be non-compliant than those with fewer nights.

¹³⁵ Compared with mothers who had minor time, odds of non-compliance were higher for all other Scheme time categories. Numbers of mothers with substantial, major and sole time and who had valid compliance information were small ($n=8-14$). Differences were significant for mothers with sole-time.

Table 9.4 Liable mothers: odds of non-compliance related to the former relationship children

Factor	Odds of being non-compliant (where reference group odds=1)	Odds	SE	95% conf. interval	t	<i>p</i>>t
Mother's nights with child in last 12 months	For each additional night	1.01	0.003	1.004–1.01	3.66	<i>p</i> =.0003
Mother's overnights per week (ref: less than one)	one or more a week	5.85	3.93	1.57–21.85	2.63	<i>p</i> =.009
Arrangements of former relationship children (ref: children mainly with father)	Children mainly with mother	15.76	15.89	2.18–113.84	2.73	<i>p</i> =.006
	equal-time	1.89	1.28	0.50–7.12	1.94	<i>p</i> =.349
	split-residence	5.92	4.69	1.25–28.01	2.24	<i>p</i> =.025
Split-residence (ref: no)	yes	3.62	2.89	0.76–17.34	1.61	<i>p</i> =.108

Notes: Data are weighted. *n*=146 mothers. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. 'Child' means focal child. 'Former relationship children' mean those aged 18 years or younger.

When all former relationship children were considered, odds of non-compliance were higher where the mother had more-time, equal-time and split-residence compared with less-time, although equal-time did not reach significance. Odds were highest for mothers who had all children mainly with them.

Of note, higher odds for split-residence mothers were nonsignificant when the reference group was same arrangement for all siblings (odds 3.62, *p*=.108). The small numbers of split-residence mothers (*n*=20) with valid compliance information may play a role.

9.2.5 *Family dynamics*

Nonresident fathers who have a cooperative relationship with their former partner are more compliant (see, for example, Andrews et al. 2011; Bradshaw et al. 1999; Ryan 1991; Skinner 2002; Sonenstein & Calhoun 1990). As Table 9.5 shows, parental relationship quality in the last 12 months (with ‘cooperative’ as the reference group); ‘great deal or some’ general conflict¹³⁶; and whether the mother used a lawyer or mediation service (here a proxy for conflict in early separation) were nonsignificant. The latter is not surprising as the majority (74%) of liable mothers had legal or other intervention. Compared with mothers with a cooperative relationship, those with a fearful relationship had marginally lower odds (odds 0.13, $p=.058$). However, when fearful mothers were compared with all other liable mothers (as a group), odds of non-compliance were significantly lower (odds 0.22, $p=.027$).

¹³⁶ As detailed in Section 4.4.1, conflict was measured by a dichotomous variable (‘great deal/some’ and ‘very little/none’) to maximise power.

Table 9.5 Liable mothers: odds of non-compliance related to family dynamics

Factor	Odds of being non-compliant (where reference group odds=1)	Odds	SE	95% conf. interval	t	p>t
Parental relationship quality in the last 12 months (ref: cooperative)	friendly	0.22	0.25	0.02–2.01	–1.35	<i>p</i> =.178
	distant	0.57	0.66	0.06–5.54	–0.48	<i>p</i> =.629
	lots of conflict	0.63	0.67	0.08–5.07	–0.44	<i>p</i> =.661
	fearful	0.13	0.14	0.02–1.07	–1.89	<i>p</i> =.058
Fearful (ref: no)	yes	0.22	0.15	0.06–0.84	–2.22	<i>p</i> =.027
Great deal or some conflict in the last 12 months¹ (ref: great deal or some)	very little or none	1.40	0.94	0.37–5.217	0.50	<i>p</i> =.620
Used lawyer or mediation (ref: no)	yes	2.59	1.82	0.65–10.31	1.35	<i>p</i> =.176
Conflict over money in last 12 months² (ref: frequently or sometimes argued)	rarely or never argued or did not talk about money	5.54	3.33	1.71–18.01	2.85	<i>p</i> =.004
Emotionally very close to child³ (ref: yes)	no	1.38	0.82	0.43–4.42	0.55	<i>p</i> =.583
Distance between parents' houses	For each additional km apart	1.00	0.00	0.999–1.001	0.94	<i>p</i> =.346

Factor	Odds of being non-compliant (where reference group odds=1)	Odds	SE	95% conf. interval	t	p>t
How well parenting arrangements working for liable mother (ref: working well)	not working well	0.26	0.16	0.08–0.85	–2.23	p=.025

Notes: Data are weighted. Odds of 1.00 may not equal exactly 1.00 due to rounding. $n=146$ mothers. Numbers for some variables may be less due to missing data. ‘Child’ means focal child. 1. ‘Great deal or some’ includes ‘varies’. ‘Very little or none’ includes ‘no contact in last 12 months’ and ‘no contact ever’. 2. ‘Did not talk about money’ includes ‘no contact in last 12 months’ and ‘no contact ever’. 3. Emotional closeness was not asked if either parent never saw the focal child.

Conflict over money was related to non-compliance but not as expected. Significantly *higher* odds (odds 5.54, $p=.004$) were found for liable mothers who rarely or never argued over money or did not talk about money than those with frequent or some arguments.

Emotional closeness, a factor relevant to compliance in liable-father cases (Davis & Wikeley 2002), was nonsignificant. Odds were significantly lower for liable mothers who felt that the arrangements were not working well for them. This finding indicates a reverse relationship for liable mothers between satisfaction with parenting arrangements and compliance than found in research with parents in liable-father cases (see, for example, Alderson-Gill and Associates 2003; Arditti & Keith 1993; Atkinson & McKay 2005).

9.2.6 *Personal wellbeing*

Table 9.6 focuses on the liable mother’s wellbeing. The odds of non-compliance did not differ significantly for life satisfaction or personal wellbeing.

Table 9.6 Liable mothers: odds of non-compliance related to personal wellbeing

Factor	Odds of being non-compliant (where reference group odds=1)	Odds	SE	95% conf. interval	t	p>t
Life satisfaction	For each incremental increase	1.04	0.16	0.77–1.39	0.24	<i>p</i> =.807
Personal wellbeing	For each incremental increase	1.22	0.18	0.91–1.64	1.33	<i>p</i> =.184

Notes: Data are weighted. *n*=146 mothers. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data.

9.2.7 *Satisfaction and fairness of the child support payment*

As Table 9.7 indicates, satisfaction with payment amount and fairness of child support had no significant impact on non-compliance for liable mothers. This is in contrast to the positive relationship between fairness and compliance found in research for liable fathers (Davis & Wikeley 2002; Lin 2000). Significant variation in satisfaction and fairness scores for liable mothers across different parenting arrangements (see Table 8.9) could be relevant to the nonsignificant results.

Table 9.7 Liable mothers: odds of non-compliance related to satisfaction and fairness of child support payment

Factor	Odds of being non-compliant (where reference group odds=1)	Odds	SE	95% conf. interval	t	p>t
Satisfaction with amount of child support paid	For each incremental increase	0.95	0.07	0.82–1.10	–0.69	<i>p</i> =.493
Fairness of child support for liable mother	For each incremental increase	1.01	0.08	0.87–1.17	0.11	<i>p</i> =.911

Notes: Data are weighted. *n*=146 mothers. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data

9.3 Modelling of the key predictors of non-compliance for liable mothers

To sum up, liable mothers had significantly higher odds of non-compliance in the bivariate analyses if they had: (i) more overnights with the focal child; (ii) all children mainly with them or in split-residence; (iii) a former partner who had repartnered; (iv) self-employment as their main income source; and (v) low conflict over money. Odds were marginally higher for mothers with a resident child; for each additional year since separation; and if their former partner had repartnered with no new or stepchildren rather than not repartnered. Lower odds applied if they had: (i) biological children from more than one relationship; (ii) government payment as their main income; (iii) arrangements that were not working well for them; and (iv) a fearful parental relationship.

Notably, all liable mothers with a private agreement (*n*=8) were compliant. This latter factor was precluded from being considered in the logistic modelling of non-compliance as it perfectly predicted failure (odds 1.00). This result may be because of the small size of the sample (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001: 522) and would need to be tested with a larger sample to see if this association still held.

To determine the appropriate variables to use in the modelling that will as a set predict non-compliance for liable mothers, significant and marginally significant¹³⁷ variables were examined for the possibility of multicollinearity, that is, a strong relationship between variables (see Tabachnick & Fidell 2001: 522-523). As the present study's theoretical framework proposed that enacting the mother role would matter for liable mothers' non-compliance and, as shown in Chapter 6, there are significant differences within the liable mother group relating to parenting-time, significant variables were first tested to confirm whether they were strongly associated with overnights. (Variables that directly measured parenting time such as equal-time with focal child and arrangements for all former relationship children were not tested.) It was determined that having a resident child and reporting that the parenting arrangements for the focal child were working well were associated with more overnights. Further, time since separation was associated with whether the former partner had repartnered. As the latter variable had substantial missing data ($n=19$ did not know the repartnering status), this variable was omitted from the modelling. All other variables were not strongly associated with another variable considered for the models.

Logistic regression modelling was used to determine the predictors of non-compliance for liable mothers. The dependent variable was 1=non-compliance, 0=compliance. The model predicts the probability that the liable mother is non-compliant. As all measures of parenting-time had significantly higher odds of non-compliance when the liable mother had more time, one measure of parenting-time was chosen for the final model: the mother's overnights with the focal child.

As in the previous logistic regression analyses (see Section 5.3.1), significant and marginally significant variables were considered for inclusion in the logistic regression modelling. Six variables were originally selected as predictors: (i) overnights, (ii) conflict over money, (iii) main

¹³⁷ Former partner repartnered with a new/stepchild was not tested as former partner repartnered (a significant variable) substantially covers this concept, only one category was marginally significant and it was nonsignificant overall.

income source; (iv) time since separation; (v) fearful parental relationship¹³⁸; and (vi) biological children from more than one relationship. Although this model was significant overall ($F=4.95$, $p<.001$), the addition of the latter two variables did not provide any additional predictive power. Both were nonsignificant once conflict over money was included in the modelling. Time since separation was marginally significant ($p=.064$) as was low conflict over money ($p=.059$) controlling for the other variables. Overnights and self-employment were significant ($p<.001$) although the latter had very high odds and a wide confidence interval (odds 59.94, CI 9.24–388.79)¹³⁹. (A model with these six predictors is shown at Appendix B, Table B9.)

The final model (Model 1) shows the odds of non-compliance for each additional overnight with the focal child¹⁴⁰ and low conflict over money. Overnights with the focal child was chosen to reflect the ‘intensity’ of day-to-day involvement in mothering. This model was statistically significant ($p<.001$) confirming the working hypothesis that non-compliance for liable mothers was associated with the intensity of the mother role.

Table 9.8 details the results of the modelling.

¹³⁸ The fearful relationship variable was chosen to represent parental relationship quality rather than the five-level relationship quality variable as the former was significant while the latter was marginally significant.

¹³⁹ This variable was included because of its importance to the analysis. Discussion on the inclusion of this variable in the modelling is outlined later in this section.

¹⁴⁰ Details of a model using the parenting-time with all former relationship children measure (an alternative measure of intensity of mothering) is shown at Appendix B, Table B10. This model was significant overall ($p=.001$). Liable mothers with more-time, and equal-time had significantly higher odds of non-compliance and split-residence liable mothers had marginally higher odds. Low conflict over money had significantly higher odds of non-compliance.

Table 9.8 Logistic regression model of odds of non-compliance for liable mothers: Model 1

Factor	Odds ratios
Mother’s overnights with the focal child in last 12 months (for each additional night)	1.01 (<i>p</i> <.001)
Conflict over money in last 12 months (ref: frequently or sometimes argued) rarely or never argued or did not talk about money	6.59 (<i>p</i> =.002)
Number of liable mothers	143
F	11.68 F(2, 5002)
Prob> F	<i>p</i> <.001

Notes: Data are weighted. ‘Did not talk about money’ includes ‘no contact in last 12 months’ and ‘no contact ever’.

To summarise, for each additional overnight the mother spent with the focal child, odds of non-compliance increased by 1% and were 6.6 times higher for mothers with low conflict over money.

An alternative model (Model 1a) is shown at Table 9.9. This model includes two variables omitted from Model 1. This is shown to illustrate the impact of having self-employment as the main income source. One consequence is that the number of cases in Model 1a drop to 137. The other result is the very large odds and wide confidence intervals for self-employed liable mothers (*n*=11 with compliance information) reflect the small cell sizes. Numbers with a main source of government payments were also low (*n*=12). Issues of sparse data were exacerbated when other predictors were added to Model 1a. Nonetheless, this was not extensive enough to cause failure of convergence.¹⁴¹ Variables with wide confidence intervals because of sparse data can be used in logistic regression if they are important to the analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Moreover, large odds can mean a large effect (Greenland, Schwartzbaum & Finkle 2000). This is probably the case here as 86% of self-employed liable mothers were non-compliant—although it is unlikely to be of the magnitude

¹⁴¹ Stata provides a warning where convergence is not possible (de Irala, Navajas & del Castillo 1997).

shown in Model 1a. Results from this variable should be interpreted cautiously.

Time since separation, the other additional variable in Model 1a, was nonsignificant when the other three variables were considered.¹⁴²

Because of these reservations, and to maximise numbers of cases with the least number of predictors necessary, Model 1 at Table 9.8 which omits main income source (and, as a consequence, time since separation) is preferred.

Table 9.9 Logistic regression model of odds of non-compliance for liable mothers: Model 1a

Factor	Odds ratios
Mother’s overnights with the focal child in last 12 months (for each additional night)	1.01 (<i>p</i> <.001)
Conflict over money in last 12 months (ref: frequently or sometimes argued) rarely or never argued or did not talk about money	4.25 (<i>p</i> =.026)
Main income source (ref: salary or wages) self-employed/other	65.63 (<i>p</i> <.001)
government income support	1.00 (<i>p</i> =.999)
Time since separation	1.13 (<i>p</i> =.078)
Number of liable mothers	137
F	6.94 F(5, 4,993)
Prob> F	<i>p</i> <.001

9.4 Discussion

Overnights with the focal child and low conflict over money together predicted non-compliance for liable mothers. This section examines these two predictors in more detail and discusses two factors (financial circumstances and positive parental relationships) found to predict compliance in the research with liable-father cases but nonsignificant for liable mothers in the present study.

¹⁴² Once main income source was omitted from the model, time since separation which was marginally significant in the model with six predictors (see Appendix B, Table B9) moved to nonsignificant (*p*=.382) and was also removed from the final model (Model 1).

Of note, one limitation of the bivariate analyses above, and the logistic modelling, was that some variables had small subgroups and therefore lacked statistical power to test relationships. Further, some variables with significantly higher odds of non-compliance had categories with large confidence intervals. Results for these variables, and the discussion below, should be read with this caution in mind.

9.4.1 ***Non-compliance and parenting time***

Liable mothers' compliance decreased with the number of overnights, as illustrated in Figure 9.1 below.

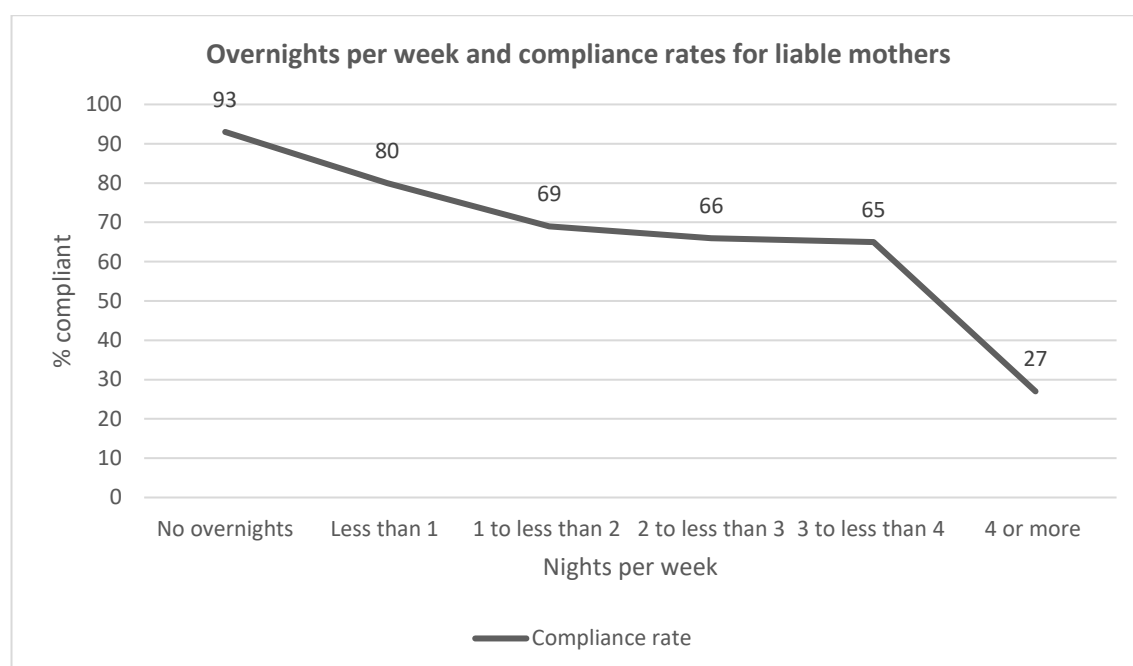


Figure 9-1 Liable mother compliance by overnights per week with focal child

Mothers’ non-compliance could be interpreted as substitution of time for money and enacting the socially expected, gendered mother role. This finding indicates a different association between time and money to that found in the research with liable-father cases where regular payment of child support was positively associated with time spent with children (see, for example, Amato 2010; Graham & Beller 2002; Juby, Le Bourdais & Marcil-Gratton 2005). Further, non-compliant fathers frequently report no time with children or maternal gatekeeping as reasons for non-compliance (see, for example, Bradshaw et al. 1999; Dubey 1995; Dudley 1991; Mandell 1995a). While the recent Australian research on compliance and parenting time noted that shared-time liable fathers had similar high compliance to those with less time (see, for example, Qu & Weston 2010; Qu et al. 2014)¹⁴³ this research showed that payee mothers reported significantly lower compliance for fathers with no time.

¹⁴³ While the small group of equal-time liable fathers reported slightly lower compliance in one wave of this study (Qu & Weston 2010), their compliance was the same as fathers with no time and nonsignificant.

The association between overnights and compliance for mothers needs to take into account different patterns of parenting for liable mothers and liable fathers. As noted previously, 43% of liable mothers had substantial time or more with the focal child. In contrast, this applied to 17% of liable fathers.¹⁴⁴ Further, mothers with no overnights (including those who spent no time with the focal child in the last 12 months) had the highest compliance of all liable mothers. While the odds of non-compliance for liable fathers did not differ as overnights increased, odds increased significantly as the frequency of face-to-face contact decreased. Fathers who saw their child at least fortnightly had lower odds of non-compliance than those who saw their child less frequently (odds 0.55, $p=.024$, data not shown).

While it is clear that more parenting-time is associated with non-compliance, the small numbers of liable mothers in the present study who made a late payment ($n=26$), a partial payment ($n=7$) or paid none of the expected amount ($n=17$) precluded a detailed analysis of non-compliance separately for these three subgroups. There may be a different relationship between factors that affect late payment and not paying in full, or at all. There is some evidence for this view as it is probable (as foreshadowed in Section 7.5), that liable mothers who paid none of the expected amount had more parenting-time with all their children.¹⁴⁵

9.4.1.1 *Split-residence*

The significantly higher odds of non-compliance for the substantial minority of liable mothers with split-residence (27% of liable mothers with compliance information) is interesting. This group comprised mothers with at least one child in shared or majority-time and therefore

¹⁴⁴ These two figures are based on liable parents with valid compliance information and thus may differ slightly from the figures that apply to the full sample of liable parents detailed in Chapter 5.

¹⁴⁵ A comparison of the odds of a liable mother paying none of the expected amount showed that compared with a majority-time liable mother, liable mothers with equal or more-time with all their children were significantly more likely to pay none of the expected amount: equal-time odds 24.35 ($p=.007$) and more-time odds 155.15 ($p<.001$).

performing the role of mother as ‘present’. As indicated in Table 7.9, non-compliant split-residence mothers mainly paid in full but late.¹⁴⁶ It is possible that different factors affect late payment. The high rate of late payment among split-residence liable mothers may have occurred by chance. Further research on different types of non-compliance with larger datasets of liable mothers may clarify this.

9.4.2 *Arguments about money*

The finding of higher odds of non-compliance among liable mothers who rarely argued about money was surprising. While it was first considered that this finding reflected the concentration of liable mothers in Child Support Collect, where ‘choice’ to comply is less relevant and payments can be enforced, having a Child Support Collect case is unlikely to be the main reason for this finding. Collection method was nonsignificant (odds 1.13, $p=.849$) and the compliance rate was similar regardless of collection method (64–67%).¹⁴⁷

Research with minority-time fathers (Philip 2014) suggests that low conflict can be treated as a proxy for trust, that is, the liable fathers trusts the payee mother to spend child support appropriately. Issues of trust and lack of control over how child support is spent are common reasons for non-payment for liable fathers in Australia (see, for example, Hawthorne & Lennings 2008; Natalier & Hewitt 2010) and internationally (see, for example, Dubey 1995; Mandell 1995b).

Here liable mothers with cooperative relationships and low conflict over money had the lowest compliance which suggests that other reasons for the association with non-compliance could apply. For example, liable mothers’ smaller expected amounts, in-kind contributions, or more overnights requiring more direct spending on the child, could be relevant.

¹⁴⁶ Split-residence liable mothers were significantly more likely to pay late than other liable mothers (40% paid late compared with 10% less-time, 7% equal-time and 4% more-time liable mothers, $p=.028$) based on a cross-tabulation of late payment by liable mother group types.

¹⁴⁷ This may also reflect that, apart from government payments, deductions from salary and wages and other non-voluntary methods of collection are not routinely used until the liable parent defaults on regular payments.

This makes sense as liable mothers with more nights had the least arguments about money.

9.4.3 ***Income and employment***

Vnuk (2010) in her review of the previous literature hypothesised that ‘inability to pay’ would be a factor in compliance for liable mothers in Australia. Referring to the scant literature on liable mothers, Vnuk noted the generally low incomes of minority-time mothers even when employed. These mothers frequently rely on income support and, as highlighted by the research in Chapter 2, are concentrated at the lower end of the liability continuum.

The research with liable-father cases in the US highlight the role of income as a predictor of non-compliance (Meyer & Bartfeld 1994; Sonenstein & Calhoun 1990), with affordability frequently reported by fathers as a reason for their non-compliance in the US (Dubey 1995; Dudley 1991) and in Australia (Blamey & Sutton 1999).¹⁴⁸

Contrary to the research with liable-father cases and the scant research on mothers’ payment of child support that focused only on nonresident mothers, self-reported ‘poor’ financial circumstances, low income and lack of paid employment—factors that featured in the international qualitative literature outlined in Chapter 3 as reasons for non-payment—did not significantly increase the odds of non-compliance for liable mothers. Two reasons may account for this finding. First, the present study used a strict definition of compliance rather than the broader ‘payment’ category. Second, liable mothers in Australia are not equivalent to *nonresident* (minority-time) mothers covered in the international literature. As emphasised previously, only 54% of liable mothers with compliance information fit into the definition of a minority-time mother, that is do not have at least equal-time with one or more of their children.

¹⁴⁸ A review of the compliance literature informing the Canadian child support system (Alderson-Gill and Associates 1999) reiterated the role of willingness to pay.

Of the two possible explanations, the second one may be the more likely. Being the liable parent but not having minority-time of all former relationship children indicates that you are the higher income parent in the case. The inclusion of this substantial subgroup (46% of all liable mothers) could cancel out the impact of low income minority-time mothers. Mothers with the lowest incomes (and thus the lowest capacity to pay) are the least able to avoid being compliant. These were minority-time liable mothers reliant on a government payment as their main income source. They had lower odds of non-compliance because, unlike deductions from wages and salary, deductions are routinely set up for parents with Child Support Collect (here, all liable mothers relying on government payments). Further, government payments became nonsignificant once overnights were considered suggesting that parenting time plays a role.

As shown in Model 1a, non-compliance was high for self-employed mothers. Other variables indicate that self-employed liable mothers were a disadvantaged group with high levels of hardship. Of note, most (91%) self-employed mothers reported low conflict over money and this might be applicable. This is the sole predictor of non-compliance that appears to be gender-neutral. Analysis of liable fathers' non-compliance shows increased odds for self-employed fathers (odds 3.16, $p < .001$, data not shown).

9.4.4 ***Parental relationship quality***

While parental relationship quality predicts compliance in the research with liable-father cases (Bell, Kazimirski & La Valle 2006; Ryan 1991; Teachman 1991; Walter 2002), and in the UK is seen as the key driver of compliance behaviour (Andrews et al. 2011; Skinner 2013), the association with amicable relationships was positive. Research with payee mothers (see, for example, Zubrick et al. 2008) found a significant linear relationship between conflict and full payment. Here, liable mothers with negative relationships had the lowest odds of non-compliance. Most (87%) fearful mothers were compliant. They had significantly lower odds of non-compliance (odds 0.22, $p = .027$) when

compared with liable mothers who did not describe their relationship as fearful. Odds became nonsignificant once conflict over money was considered in the modelling (see Appendix B, Table B9). This suggests that conflict over money may overlap with having a fearful relationship: 40% of fearful mothers reported that money frequently or sometimes caused arguments.

9.5 **Summary**

This chapter explored the factors that affected the odds of non-compliance in liable-mother cases. Results revealed an association between parenting time and non-compliance for liable mothers. Odds increased with each additional overnight with the focal child. This relationship also held when all former relationship children were considered, odds were higher for more-time and split-residence mothers and marginally higher for equal-time mothers than for mothers with all children mainly with their father. Parenting time together with low conflict over money as a set predicted non-compliance.

Further, in the smaller subgroups, all mothers with private agreements were compliant.¹⁴⁹ Of course, this result may have occurred by chance. The few mothers with self-employment as their main income source had significantly higher odds of non-compliance. Self-employment was the one factor predicting non-compliance equally applicable to liable mothers and liable fathers.

The next and final chapter (Chapter 10) summarises the key findings from each chapter in the context of the study's feminist theoretical approach and provides insights for policy, service delivery, and future research.

¹⁴⁹ This factor could not be added to the logistic model as it perfectly predicted failure.

Chapter 10 Conclusion and future directions

Child support compliance continues to attract considerable policy interest in Australia and internationally, as evidenced by the 2014 Australian parliamentary inquiry into the Child Support Program (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2015), and the 2016 UK Parliamentary inquiry. Low levels of compliance undermine the viability of any scheme, and put children at greater risk of child poverty.

A commonly held view in Australia—especially by fathers’ groups—is that mothers with a child support liability ‘never pay’.¹⁵⁰ The present study sought to investigate whether this was indeed the case and, if so, why.

Three research questions guided the study:

Question 1: *“What are the characteristics of mothers with a child support liability in Australia and what are the key differences between liable mothers and liable fathers?”*

Question 2: *“Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?”*

Question 3: *“What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?”*

These questions were addressed using data from the Child Support Reform Study. As the CSRS data were from a representative sample of separated parents with an active child support case in Australia, the findings can be generalised to the child support caseload. A feminist-informed quantitative methodology was used to answer these questions. One of the strengths of quantitative research for policy analysis is that ‘it allows the understanding of patterns’ (Burkinshaw 2013: 237) and typically provides a more reliable basis for social change than anecdotal evidence (Sprague & Zimmerman 1993). This methodological approach is

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, the comments under the article “Deadbeat dads” face fines in sweeping changes to child support’ (Bita 2015).

influenced by Risman (1993: 20) who points out that a methodology is feminist ‘if it can be used to further gender equity’.

Feminist theory asserts that gender is socially constructed. As outlined in Chapter 1, it is not just men and women who are shaped by gender roles but specifically mothers and fathers. Behavioural norms for ‘good’ mothers and ‘good’ fathers differ. Mothers are expected to invest in their child and to be ever-present and all-caring (Ennis 2014; Hays 1996).

While there is substantial feminist research on child support, this body of work mostly focuses on mothers as payees as this is the more common role for separated mothers and assumes a less-time father and a more-time mother division of care. The present study makes a contribution to the feminist-informed research on separated mothers more generally, and to child support policy and its impact on separated mothers more specifically. It shows how applying a feminist approach to child support can be used to explore a wider range of mothering and liability (i.e., liable mothers) in the context of the pervasiveness of ‘hegemonic motherhood’ (Arendell 1999). In particular, it illuminates the role of male power and gendered patterns of parenting—both caregiving and employment—that influence the movement of mothers into the liable parent role and their child support compliance.

I now summarise the answers to the three research questions. The implications of the research findings are then discussed in the context of a gender lens on contemporary child support policy and practice.

10.1.1 *Question 1: What are the characteristics of mothers with a child support liability in Australia?*

Mothers with a liability are not a single homogenous group. That said, several factors characterised many of these mothers.

First, liable mothers were still very engaged with their children: over half (57%) of liable mothers had at least one resident child while almost half (46%) had equal-time or more-time with a least one former relationship child. Liable mothers who had no resident children spent an average of

55 nights with the focal child in the previous 12 months: only three per cent spent no time with this child.

Second, liable mothers were less likely to be in paid employment and to work full-time than liable fathers. They were marginally less likely than liable fathers to report self-employment as their main income source but they were significantly more likely to have a self-employed former partner.

Third, more than one-in-three liable mothers described the relationship with their former partner in negative terms with 18% 'fearful'. Further, cases with a liable mother were less likely to have parenting arrangements determined by the mother than when the father was liable.

A final key characteristic was that liable mother cases generally involved older children: the youngest child in around two-thirds (65%) of these cases was aged 11 years or older.

As there is little known about the composition of this group of separated mothers in Australia, a liable mother typology was developed for the present study. The typology is based on time with former-relationship children aged 18 years or younger representing the intensity of the mothering role: (i) less than half of the time ('less-time'), (ii) 'equal-time', (iii) more than half of the time ('more-time'), and (iv) 'split-residence'. Two key findings emerged: (i) a lower rate employment (and consequently lower income) among less-time liable mothers with almost half (48%) not in paid employment compared with 3–11% in the other three subgroups of liable mothers; and (ii) wellbeing and positive family dynamics—particularly satisfaction with the workability of the parenting arrangements and the frequency of arguments about money—generally had a positive relationship with time. In other words, liable mothers enacting a role that more closely matched the gendered norm of 'good' mothering reported higher satisfaction and personal wellbeing.

10.1.2 **Question 2: Are liable mothers less compliant than liable fathers?**

Whether there are differences in compliance between liable mothers and liable fathers depends on the way in which compliance is defined operationally, and whether financial and other contributions are considered. For example, most liable mothers made some in-kind payment towards the costs of their child.

When compliance was measured as ‘paid in full and on time’, there was no statistically significant difference between liable mothers’ and liable fathers’ compliance rate (64% for mothers; 77% for fathers). Previous Australian research (see, for example, Qu et al. 2014) report a slightly lower rate of compliance by liable mothers than liable fathers but no results from any statistical tests.¹⁵¹

Compliance was marginally lower for liable mothers than liable fathers (i) when restricted to administratively assessed cases (that is, agreement cases were excluded); and (ii) in Private Collect cases. Notably, liable mothers were significantly more likely to pay neither in full nor on time (16% compared with 7% of liable fathers) and significantly more likely to pay none of the expected amount (11% compared with 2% of liable fathers).

However, this does not mean that liable mothers made no contribution towards their children’s needs. Specifically, liable mothers’ higher rate of shared-time and split-residence meant more direct spending on the child and more frequent arrangements that replaced cash child support. Moreover, half of liable mothers made a payment for a prescribed item such as school fees, uniforms and books and essential medical or dental costs. The majority (83%) contributed something in-kind, including all liable mothers who did not pay in full. This suggests that being aware of,

¹⁵¹ Whether the lower compliance found by Qu and others (2014) was statistically nonsignificant or not significance was not tested is unclear.

and meeting, their child's needs is an integral part of the mother role regardless of the intensity of day-to-day caregiving.

Under the more expansive measure of compliance ('soft' compliance) which included agreed nil payment, 85% of liable mothers were considered compliant or 'soft' compliant, up from 64% when the stricter compliance measure was used (compared with 91% and 77% for liable fathers). Liable mothers' generally lower liabilities (43% were less than \$1,000 a year) are likely to be relevant.

Around half of liable parents had a former partner who was also interviewed. Examination of reports from both former partners revealed low levels of concordance on compliance among liable-mother dyads with slightly higher concordance between reports of former partners on non-compliance: 27% and 29%.

However, concordance was somewhat higher when responses related to in-kind contributions were compared. In half of the liable-mother dyads both former partners reported payment for a prescribed item—this proportion was significantly higher than for the liable-father dyads. In 64% of liable-mother dyads both ex-partners reported an in-kind contribution, a level of concordance not found here for liable-father dyads (52%), or in the previous research with liable-father cases. Concordant reports in the liable-mother dyads increased to 64% once 'soft' compliance was considered—more than double the level of concordance using the 'in full and on time' definition.

10.1.3 Question 3: What are the apparent reasons for non-compliance by liable mothers?

Research exploring why some liable mothers are non-compliant based on their own reports is almost completely absent from the international child support survey work to date. The answer to Question 3 addresses this gap in the evidence base by providing reasons for non-compliance for liable mothers with a focus on the relationship with parenting time (that is, intensity of day-to-day involvement).

Parenting-time was associated with non-compliance for liable mothers. Based on the typology of liable mothers detailed in Chapter 6, 19% of liable mothers with less-time, 30% with equal-time, 78% with more-time, and 58% with split-residence were non-compliant.

Two factors in tandem predicted non-compliance: more overnights and low levels of parental conflict over money. Odds increased with the number of nights with the focal child.¹⁵² This suggests that parenting time is being substituted for money and that this was generally acceptable for the payee father given that arguments about money were the lowest for mothers with more overnights. Of course, an alternative explanation is that money is substituted for time given the lowest non-compliance was among the small number of mothers with no overnights. Of note, in the small group ($n=8$) of mothers with a private informal agreement for child support none was non-compliant. Most of these mothers ($n=5$) had less time with all their children.

Low conflict over money could be reflective of the quality of the relationship between the parents. Less than half (46%) of mothers with a cooperative relationship were compliant. In contrast, almost all (87%) fearful mothers were compliant.

While it was expected from the literature that low income mothers would have more difficulty paying child support in full and on time (see, for example in Australia Silvey & Birrell 2004; Wolffs & Shallcross 2000 and in the US Becerra & Org 2001; Herrerias 2008), this was not the case. Instead, mothers whose main income was a government payment had *lower* non-compliance than those with salary and wages. Self-employed liable mothers had very high odds of non-compliance even after controlling for number of overnights with the focal child.

¹⁵² When the arrangements for all children were considered (an alternative measure of parenting time), liable mothers with more-time or split-residence had higher odds and equal-time liable mothers had marginally higher odds.

10.1.4 ***Relevance of gender expectations of mothering***

These findings suggest that liable mothers did indeed differ from liable fathers and that this in part was related to the different gendered expectations for a ‘good’ mother. In the words of Miller (2005: 215), ‘[m]othering is not just cast as a job; it is framed as an identity, and as such cannot be abandoned’. Although there is a potential for separation to allow parents to ‘undo’ or ‘redo’ gender, it appears that separated mothers—including those liable to pay child support—do indeed continue to ‘do gender’ (Natalier & Hewitt 2014).

Non-compliance is often seen as a facet of disengagement, particularly of non-involved fathers. Nonetheless, there is a perception that mothers do not pay child support. The present study explored child support liability and compliance for liable mothers within this gendered context. Non-compliance in liable-mother cases can be predicted by parenting time, that is, liable mothers with fewer overnights were more likely to comply. By contrast, mothers with the most overnights were the least compliant with formal child support but still provided in-kind support.

The findings of the present study indicate that rather than ‘deadbeat’, disengaged parents, non-compliant liable mothers could be better described as ‘engaged non-compliers’. Put simply, they may not pay regular child support but in every other way they are involved in their children’s lives.

10.2 **Gender neutral policy?**

What do the findings of the present study outlined above mean for child support policy? Gender-neutral policy does not necessarily produce gender-neutral results. The present study’s findings illustrate the importance of taking a gender perspective to policy or, as Broderick, a previous Sex Discrimination Commissioner, puts it, firstly ‘asking the woman question’, then ‘asking the man question’ followed by ‘interrogating institutions and structures for hidden gender implications’ (Broderick 2012).

The study's findings suggest a need to move beyond child support policy and research that solely positions mothers as payees and fathers as the liable parent. They indicate that a generic 'liable parent' based on liable fathers does not adequately represent liable mothers' experiences. (The Australian Law Reform Commission extended its Terms of Reference in its 2011 inquiry into family violence based on this insight from my dissertation.)

As outlined in Section 1.4.3, the Child Support Program Compliance Policy (2008) is underpinned by four key factors drawn from the extant research that affect motivation to comply: (i) the level of cooperation and the relationship between parents; (ii) time with the child and the quality of the parent-child relationship; (iii) perceptions of fairness; and (iv) employment. In other words, non-compliance is assumed to be associated with a less cooperative and poorer parental relationship, little or no time with the child (and thus, a poorer parent-child relationship); the view that child support is unfair; and unstable or no employment.

The present study shows that the opposite relationship applies for the first two factors mentioned. Liable mothers with more overnights and high levels of cooperation were non-compliant. Perceptions of fairness did not significantly affect the odds of non-compliance on its own but fairness did relate to time for liable mothers, with fairness ratings decreasing as time with the children decreased. Finally, unemployed liable mothers were more compliant rather than less; an association operating in the opposite direction to that found in the liable father research. This probably reflects the impact of parenting time on liable mothers' compliance—those mothers receiving government payments had less than shared-time. Once overnights were considered, no differences were found. Only one factor appears to be a gender-neutral influence on motivation to comply: self-employed liable mothers had significantly higher odds of non-compliance than those who were employees. To sum up, as hypothesised, behavioural responses to ostensibly gender-neutral laws do appear to be influenced by gender norms and expectations.

An inquiry into the child support system is a regular occurrence in Australia: the 2003 and 2014 House of Representative Standing Committees and the 2005 Ministerial Taskforce are three examples.¹⁵³ It is important that child support policy is guided by empirical evidence rather than anecdote (Cook, K & Natalier 2016; Hancock 1998). The present study's findings add to the evidence base¹⁵⁴, especially to a surprisingly little studied group: liable-mother cases. Research with subgroups—on the margins—can illuminate central issues and offer new explanations for thorny policy problems. They can also help to shed light on the way forward.

10.3 **Key issues for child support policy**

This section discusses six key findings of particular reference to child support policy in Australia. These findings have implications either for the formula (how the costs of children are calculated and distributed between parents) and/or for compliance. The findings relate to: (i) shared-time; (ii) split-residence and older children (iii) the minimum liability (iv) income from self-employment and other sources; (v) safety concerns; and (vi) Private Collect.

10.3.1 ***Shared-time***

Although shared-time is adopted by a minority of separated parents in Australia, shared-time appears more common among recent cohorts of separated parents (Hahn & Wilkins 2014; Kaspiew, Carson, Qu et al.

¹⁵³ Discussion of policy implications in the following sections take into account the 2006–08 child support and associated Family Tax Benefit (FTB) reforms. (The CSRS data used in the analyses were from the pre-reform baseline data.) Recommendations from the 2014 inquiry into the Child Support Program (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2015) and the brief Government response to the Committee's recommendations (Australian Government 2016), are also referenced where applicable. (Details of the recommendations and the Government response are at Appendix C.)

¹⁵⁴ The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs (2015) is the latest inquiry into the Child Support Program to highlight the lack of comprehensive caseload information and recommended additional demographic information be collected. This recommendation was recently accepted by the Government who acknowledged that this would 'enable better targeting of service delivery initiatives and an improved capacity for policy development and advice' (Australian Government 2016: 2).

2015),¹⁵⁵ suggesting a substantial minority of children may experience a period of shared-time, particularly in the earlier years after separation.

This has policy implications for liable mothers. While shared-time mothers were less likely to be liable than fathers (see Section 5.1), a larger proportion of the subpopulation of *liable* mothers had shared or more time. Or to put this another way, 43% of liable mothers in 2008 had at least shared-time (30% or more nights) with the focal child compared with 18% of liable fathers.

Shared-time is more relevant for research and policy in Australia because a parent can be liable when they have equal-time or more time than the other parent. As the present study reveals, this is particularly critical for liable mothers because 15% had equal-time and 22% more-time than the other parent. Also of concern, liable mothers with shared or more-time reported lower levels of fairness. Understanding liable-mother cases assists in understanding shared-time families more broadly.

This is a good example of where a change to the formula is assumed to be gender neutral but because of gendered patterns of parenting, affect liable mothers more. Gendered patterns of parenting-time post-separation mean that mothers often have more overnights. As the findings of this study indicate, some of these mothers can be liable. Although fathers generally have higher mean income after separation than mothers (de Vaus et al. 2015), mothers generally have more time with their children. Requiring child support from parents who have the higher proportion of time in unequal shared-time cases is likely to be more applicable for liable mothers than liable fathers. Similarly, relevant are changes to the formula that affect how costs are determined and then allocated between shared-time parents; thresholds for liability; and the broad components of the formula such as income.

¹⁵⁵ But see Smyth, Chisholm, Rodgers and Son (2014). Customised data from the Child Support Program indicate shared-time may have plateaued at 15–16% of children of recently separated parents, and 11% of children in the overall caseload.

10.3.2 ***Split-residence and older children***

A second policy implication concerns split residence and older children. This raises two issues key issues for child support policy: movement into the liable parent role and how costs of children are determined and then allocated between parents.

Liable mother cases were significantly more likely to involve older children: 65% had a youngest child aged 11 years or older. It is probable that this finding reflects a different liable parent ‘experience’ for mothers compared to fathers. Rather than being the liable parent from separation, some mothers (as indicated in Section 1.3.5) become liable later in their child support case after a period as the payee, perhaps when an adolescent moves to live mainly with their father. This could also create a split-residence arrangement if another former relationship child remains living mainly with their mother. While this movement has been noted in the Australian research with adolescent children in separated families (Lodge & Alexander 2011; Mance & Yu 2010), the present study highlights the implications for child support cases. A substantial minority of all liable mothers (24%) had split-residence.

As noted above, one of the reforms to the formula in 2008 involved the allocation of higher costs for teenagers in the Cost of Children Table. As mothers are mainly liable for older children, this reform is likely to be more salient for liable-mother cases.¹⁵⁶

Another related aspect is how costs are allocated between parents with split-residence. The following scenario outlines the issue and is one example, of the ‘systematic double or triple “whammies”’ mentioned by Smyth and Henman (2010: 28) that can result from the 2008 reforms. Where there are two children in the case and the liable parent has majority-time of the older child, their liability increases when this child

¹⁵⁶ This may not always mean a higher liability. This is because the net liability is determined by the combined incomes of both parents and a larger proportion of the overall cost of children could be borne by the father if men’s incomes are typically higher than women’s incomes. In this case, the mother’s share of the cost would generate a lower liability than under the original formula because of the continuity of expenditure principle.

turns 13. This is because the cost of children changes from two children under 13 years to the higher mixed-age cost. The rationale is that while teenagers cost more, economies of scale mean that two children do not cost twice as much as one. But in this scenario, the liable parent with the older child would face higher costs with a teenager in their own household and a higher liability for the child in the other parent's household. When the case involves more than three children, which the present study indicates is frequently the case for split-residence liable mothers, issues may also arise because the formula allocates the same cost for three or more children. Previously this was five children.

There are two changes that have made the movement of older children between parents. The first was a fundamental change to the Scheme post-reform applying at a broader level has implications where children change from living mainly with one parent to mainly with the other parent. Previously, this would be a 'terminating event' ending the previous payee's eligibility for this child, requiring the new payee to make a separate application to receive child support.¹⁵⁷ Now, the case continues with the liability re-calculated, a timelier response to changes in living arrangements.

Another policy implication for older children relates to the interaction between FTB and child support via the Maintenance Action Test (MAT) (see Section 1.3.1).¹⁵⁸ Prior to January 2012, children aged 16–18 in low income families generally transferred on to Youth Allowance meaning that the MAT no longer applied to these children. A substantial increase to the maximum amount of FTB payable for this age group¹⁵⁹ lead to the retention of older children in the FTB population and therefore the MAT continued to be relevant to more parents with older teenagers.

¹⁵⁷ In practice, if parents did not notify DHS of these changes promptly the outcome for each parent varied, with the ending of liability backdated to the terminating event but eligibility for child support only from the date of the new application for assessment which could not be backdated. Now, only one notification is required and can be from either parent.

¹⁵⁸ The Maintenance Action Test (MAT) requires an administrative assessment or registered child support agreement as a prerequisite to receive more than base rate FTB

¹⁵⁹ From \$52.64 to \$214.06 a fortnight See Family Assistance Guide, <<http://guide.dss.gov.au/family-assistance-guide/3/6/1>> (accessed 24 August 2017)

Of relevance to this issue, the Government accepted the recommendation from the 2014 Inquiry that the Cost of Children Table be reviewed (Australian Government 2016).¹⁶⁰ The findings from the present study support this recommendation and highlight several components underpinning the formula that should be reviewed using the latest research and modelling. In particular, this work should consider how the costs of children are allocated in split-residence cases and whether the principle of economies of scale is appropriate to be applied. As the Cost of Children Table is based on costs net of FTB, changes in family assistance policy is also relevant, particularly for costs in the different age bands.

10.3.3 *The minimum liability*

A third policy implication relates to the application of a minimum liability. As noted in the research on the introduction of the minimum liability in 1999 (Vnuk 2000; Wolffs & Shallcross 2000), the impact on mothers and fathers was not gender-neutral. Further, this group of liable mothers appear to be already disadvantaged. Almost half (47%) less-time liable mothers reported experiencing financial hardship.

The impact of the 2008 reforms on low income liable mothers who had a minimum liability (around 16%) will depend on whether they had a regular-time child or not. International research suggests that when time is considered from a lower base in an income shares formula, fewer mothers remain liable (Lyngstad & Kitterod 2008). Recognition of regular-time affects mothers' liabilities as mothers are more likely to have some overnights. One outcome is that liability can be reduced to nil. In other words, this reform to the Scheme would move low income mothers with regular-time out of the liable parent role. However, this does not necessarily mean a net gain from the reforms once the loss of FTB was considered. This illustrates the complex policy interactions between FTB,

¹⁶⁰ But note, Vnuk, Smyth and Archer (2015: 155) foreshadowed 'little capacity or political will to act on...[these] recommendations in the current economic climate'. This view was confirmed when the Australian Government (2016) responded to the Committee's report in August 2016, that is accepting the recommendations for extending FDR 'in principle'.

child support and government payments and their consequences for low income mothers who have some overnights but not shared-time.¹⁶¹

A different outcome applies for liable mothers with less than regular-time. After the reforms, very low-income parents with a single case and 0–51 overnights had slightly higher liabilities (Smyth & Henman 2010), although this change resulted from the 2006 indexation of the minimum rate in Stage One of the reform package. However, these small increases should be seen in the context of already inadequate government payments especially Newstart. In addition, parents with 10–13% time lost their entitlement to pro-rata FTB (and associated rental assistance) and were not entitled to the higher ‘with-child’ rate of Newstart applying to those with regular-time.¹⁶²

Based on these findings, it may be appropriate to revisit the policy around the minimum liability. Concerns that a minimum liability can affect the liable parent’s capacity to afford to spend time with their child, first raised when the minimum liability was introduced in 1999 (Vnuk 2000), are still pertinent. Consideration of a special rate of FTB payable to parents who spend some overnights with their child is one option. This would facilitate overnight stays without reducing the monies going to the primary parent’s household from child support and FTB.

10.3.4 ***Self-employment***

A fourth policy implication relates to how child support income is determined, particularly for self-employed parents.

While just nine per cent of liable mothers had self-employment as their main income source, 26% had a self-employed former partner. Income source is relevant for calculation of child support as income from a business can be more easily minimised (either legitimately or not) than

¹⁶¹ Low income parents with 14–34% time receive the higher ‘with child’ rate of Newstart and rental allowance. However, low income parents already receiving the ‘with child’ rate; those not on Newstart; or not in rental accommodation were not compensated for their loss of FTB.

¹⁶² Regular-time parents otherwise eligible for FTB retained their entitlement to rental assistance, health care card and Medicare Safety Net (FaHCSIA 2008: 8).

wages/salary. Consequently, income source could affect which parent is deemed liable in split-residence and shared-time cases with mothers deemed liable where their former partner is self-employed and had the lower income.

The income or earning capacity of a parent is grounds for an application for a change of assessment, a review process where in the special circumstances of the case a change is warranted.¹⁶³ However, this process is complex, requires both parents to reveal their financial circumstances and often the outcome is not what the applicant expects.

The challenges that non-wage/salary income poses for the Scheme are regularly raised in inquiries into the Child Support Program by payees and liable parents. While changes proposed by the Ministerial Taskforce (2005) made some important improvements to the definition of income, it is clear this is a thorny issue, particularly where the liable parent has more parenting-time than their self-employed former partner. As a higher proportion of liable mothers had majority-time than liable fathers, this suggests that this scenario has more salience for them than for liable fathers as a group.

The 2014 inquiry provides an opportunity for these issues to be noted and again addressed. Several recommendations relating to lodgement of tax returns; consideration of the use of gross income in the formula; and a review of the ‘capacity to earn’ ground for change of assessment (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2015) may be relevant to this issue.

10.3.5 ***Safety concerns***

A fifth policy implication concerns family violence. Liable mothers were three times as likely to describe the relationship with their former partner as ‘fearful’ (18% compared with 6% of liable fathers), and were twice as likely as payee mothers to do so. Although parents were not asked

¹⁶³ See Child Support Guide <<http://guides.dss.gov.au/child-support-guide/2/6/14>> (viewed 24 August 2017)

directly about domestic violence, reporting a ‘fearful’ relationship is a strong indicator of controlling and intimidating behaviour and is used in the present study as a proxy measure for current or previous experience of domestic violence.

Other Australian research (see, for example, Fehlberg 2004; Sheehan & Smyth 2000) highlighted the inter-relationship between domestic violence and financial aspects of separation, with use of the family law system to continue to control (Behrens 2010). Domestic violence was a dominant theme in the qualitative nonresident mother literature discussed in Chapter 3, especially in more recent cohorts (see, for example, Bemiller 2008; Herrerias 2008; Kruk 2015). In Australia, research from Qu and others (2014) indicates that the majority of recently separated liable mothers reported emotional or physical abuse pre- or post-separation.

The present study identified an overlap between the mother having less time with all (or some) children and fearful relationships. For example, one-in-five of less-time liable mothers and 23% of split-residence liable mothers described their relationship as fearful. More-time liable mothers also had high rates of fearful relationships (17%) indicating that some of these arrangements probably represent recent parenting-time changes, perhaps from majority-time father arrangements.

These findings are consistent with research indicating domestic violence can affect the victim’s ability to parent effectively (Fish, McKenzie & MacDonald 2009), with undermining of mothering one target of coercive and controlling behaviour (Elizabeth, Gavey & Tolmie 2012; Radford & Hester 2006). Further, research suggests this behaviour can contribute to minority-time arrangements by judicial determination, ‘agreement’ in consent orders or coercion (see, for example, Braaf & Meyering 2011; Dick 1998; Laing 2010). The resulting loss of time with children, coupled

with a child support liability, could signal continuation of abuse (Green & Pearce 2002; Stahly 2000; Watson 2013).¹⁶⁴

It is noteworthy that 87% of fearful mothers were compliant; the highest rate of liable mothers. This highlights their concentration in Child Support Collect.

The finding on fearful relationships highlights the role of male power in the composition and compliance behaviour for this group of separated mothers. The rate of fearful relationships among liable mothers was raised by Vnuk (2011) in her submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) Inquiry into Family Violence and Commonwealth Law. The ALRC (2011:19) made a range of recommendations concerning child support, including the need to screen all parents in the caseload¹⁶⁵ and to consider any safety issues when specific administrative actions were contemplated. (This is further discussed in Section 10.4.3.)

Several recommendations from the 2014 Inquiry into the Child Support Program have policy relevance to liable mothers and safety concerns. In particular, the Committee recommended that mediation be used 'at the initial stage of child support cases' (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2015: xvii). While the Committee noted that mediation was not appropriate where family violence was present, implementation of this proposal would need to be carefully managed to ensure that safety concerns were adequately identified and potential power imbalances addressed.¹⁶⁶ This recommendation has 'in principle' support from the Government. However, implications for the budget noted by the Government in their response (Australian Government 2016: 2) suggest that challenges with implementing this recommendation in full.

¹⁶⁴ Liable fathers frequently report child support as a form of financial abuse (Bagshaw et al. 2010).

¹⁶⁵ The final report by the ALRC (2011) made specific reference to the findings and policy implications identified by Vnuk (2011) based on the work in the present study, and recommended that all parents be screened for family violence not just payees.

¹⁶⁶ Family Relationship Centres have their own screening tools which provide several options for family violence to be identified. Whether DHS would determine which cases were not required to attend a FRC if this was a compulsory first step as suggested in the 2014 Inquiry, and what screening would be used, is undecided.

10.3.6 ***Private Collect***

A sixth and final policy implication relates to Private Collect cases. Research with parents in liable-father cases suggests that compliance in Private Collect—while not 100%, as assumed by the Department of Human Services—is higher than in Child Support Collect (see, for example, Smyth et al. 2011; Smyth, Vnuk et al. 2014; Vnuk 2009).¹⁶⁷ This is confirmed in the present study for liable fathers, but not for liable mothers who reported similar compliance (64–67%) for Private Collect and Child Support Collect.

While the present study confirms that characteristics of parents in Private Collect cases (such as shared-time and cooperative relationships) appear to be common across the caseload, the influence of these factors on compliance operates in divergent ways in liable-father and liable-mother cases.¹⁶⁸

Payees can move or return to Child Support Collect if the liable parent is non-compliant. The present study suggests that payment of none of the assessed amount or a lower payment was often by agreement. Whether this is a challenge to the principles of the Scheme is a matter for policy consideration, and also has service delivery implications—in particular, whether the trade-offs implicit in the promotion of Private Collect (such as empowerment of parents, and the extent of conflict or cooperation) do indeed operate in ‘the best interests of children’.

There are also implications for family payment policy. The present study noted that FTB was received by fewer payee fathers than payee mothers. Changes to eligibility for means-tested FTB (such as freezing of indexation of thresholds) may mean fewer parents are required to be registered with the Child Support Program to meet the MAT in the future.

¹⁶⁷ The 2014 Inquiry highlighted the lack of reliable data on actual payment in Private Collect cases. Recommendation 19 proposed that parents be regularly surveyed with results published in the Department of Human Services Annual Report. This recommendation was accepted by the Government (Australian Government 2016).

¹⁶⁸ For example, recent research with Private Collect payee mothers (also indicating less than full compliance), found some payees mothers were intimidated into staying in Private Collect (see, for example, Cook, K et al. 2015).

This could affect payee fathers as a group more than payee mothers. However, the changes to FTB for older teenagers detailed previously, could serve as a counter-balance for some low-income payee fathers.

10.4 **Implications for service delivery**

The present study's findings also have implications for service delivery by the Department of Human Services (DHS) under its Child Support Program.

10.4.1 ***Supporting liable mothers***

What can the Department of Human Services do for this group of liable mothers? The present study clearly shows that liable mothers are not a unitary homogeneous group. Tailored support for liable mothers in different situations and points in time is required. For example, for mothers who move between liable parent and payee, whether the other parent was compliant when they were liable and what triggered the change in liable parent could be important. While case management is provided to all newly registered cases to support parents to choose the right collection method for them and entrench compliance, some parents become liable later in their child support case when the relationship between the Child Support Program and parents is already in place—perhaps after several years. Unless movement is triggered by a substantial change in overnights, no opportunity arises for DHS officers to recognise these changes and proactively offer appropriate support. Although not all changes will require case management, a procedure to identify cases that could benefit from additional services appropriate to their individual circumstances (either from DHS or community providers) should be considered. For example, split-residence cases appear to have quite specific challenges that may benefit from case management.

10.4.2 ***Non-compliance and debt***

Central point estimates of compliance based on administrative data from the Child Support Program by gender are rare. The last point-in-time release was mid-2010 and represents half of the caseload—those with Child Support Collect.

The Department has been accused of gender bias in its debt collection activities, implying that they *only* target ‘deadbeat dads’ as illustrated by the quote from Barry Williams of the Lone Fathers Association in Chapter 1. The present study highlights that the lower liabilities in liable-mother cases compared to liable-father cases mean less debt attributed to mothers. Thus, DHS predominantly focus on liable-father cases because *there are* more liable fathers *and* they have, on average, larger debts.

Currently litigation is only pursued where the parent has realisable assets. The general threshold for action is \$5,000 (see, for example, Department of Human Services 2014; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2014, 28 August: 7) as it is not economical to chase smaller debts. It would be expected that liable mothers’ generally lower liabilities would also generate less debt. In practice, this may mean that arrears owed to payee fathers may not be prioritised or followed-up.

The present study suggests that non-compliance among liable mothers is not predominantly an issue of the Child Support Program’s inability to enforce payment. This has implications for how (and when) information on collection methods is provided to parents to ensure that both parents are fully informed of the pros and cons of each option. Movement between being the liable parent, the payee and no current liability may require repeated provision of information so that the parent who is currently the payee selects the method appropriate to their circumstances.

A further implication for service delivery relates to opportunities to offset debt when the parents reverse roles in their child support case (that is, the liable parent becomes the payee). Both parents need to opt for Child Support Collect when they are the payee¹⁶⁹ for this to operate. Only

¹⁶⁹ The collection method is chosen by the payee. Parents can jointly choose Private Collect but a liable parent cannot unilaterally determine whether the case is Private Collect or Child Support Collect.

arrears that accrue during a period of Child Support Collect can be offset as 100% of the liability is assumed to be paid in Private Collect.

Two groups of liable mothers pose contrasting issues for compliance and collection of arrears. Self-employed liable mothers had very high odds of non-compliance (see Section 9.3). It appears that self-employed liable mothers and fathers are similar, at least regarding non-compliance.

In contrast, the low rate of non-compliance for liable mothers with a government payment as their main income source (9% were non-compliant) could indicate that DHS is successful in collecting the liability from this group. The 2008 reforms included a tripling of allowable deductions for child support arrears, suggesting deductions from Centrelink payments would be a useful avenue for collection of arrears from liable mothers, if warranted. However, as this group of liable mothers already experience a high rate of hardship, additional deductions for arrears may be onerous.

Interventions found to have success in increasing child support compliance overseas focus on ‘responsible fathering’. These programs work with fathers (and sometimes mothers) to re-engage with their children, reduce parental conflict and provide practical support with legal problems and employment (see, for example, McHale, Waller & Pearson 2012). Similar motivations underpin support services the Department has used to promote compliance behaviour and willingness to pay. These focus on the quality of the parental relationship post-separation such as ‘*Staying Connected*’ and ‘*Being Connected*’ (O’Hanlon & Stevenson 2005) and on fathering after separation to reduce disengagement by fathers. These programs may not be appropriate for liable mothers in Australia as the present study suggests that disengagement is not an issue.

10.4.3 ***Responding to family violence***

Identification and support for liable mothers who have fearful relationships is a challenge for the Department overall. The Child

Support Program currently screens for family violence¹⁷⁰ and makes referrals to other services where appropriate (Department of Human Services 2014) although it is unclear whether this ‘best practice’ approach is used for each contact or primarily for newly registered cases. Currently, interventions when domestic violence is present are focused on payees. Payees can apply to a Centrelink social worker for a recommendation to be exempt from collecting child support in full, or at all, if there are current safety concerns if child support is pursued.

The Australian Law Reform Commission (2011) raised the need to take a broader approach to supporting separated parents affected by family violence. The present study suggests that further consideration is required to take account of the impact of domestic violence when the affected parent is the liable parent. One option is for a family violence flag to be placed on all case records where safety concerns have been raised regardless of whether the parent is a payee, a liable parent, or the case has no current liability. Changes in liability between parents in a case can occur at a later point without necessarily being triggered by a change in parenting time. The flagging of these cases would ensure that a Child Support Program case officer contacts the parent whenever any change in assessment occurs.

A dedicated family violence response unit located in DHS, as recommended by the Committee in the 2014 Inquiry (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2015: 141),¹⁷¹ could provide support to all affected parents. This recommendation was rejected by the Government (Australian Government 2016: 13) who stated that the existing Family and Domestic

¹⁷⁰ Family violence is an umbrella term that encompasses domestic violence (that is, abusive behaviour in an intimate relationship) and abusive behaviour perpetrated by other family members.

¹⁷¹ A further recommendation from the 2014 Inquiry (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2015) was for the Australian Government to respond to the ALRC report on Family Violence and Commonwealth Law as a priority. The Committee highlighted that recommendations from the 2011 ALRC inquiry remained relevant but not yet actioned. The Government noted this recommendation but declined to take formal action (Australian Government 2016: 12).

Violence Risk Identification and Referral process ‘ensures staff are actively identifying family and domestic violence concerns, and providing targeted referrals to specialised service providers in the community or departmental social workers’.

There is a risk that fearful liable mothers already in the system may be overlooked because they are a group with high compliance. Fearful liable mothers may have different requirements than fearful payee mothers who are the usual target group when support needs are discussed. The present study suggests that liable mothers with minority-time or who have not spent time with the focal child or any of their children in the past 12 months are a particularly vulnerable group.

10.5 **Limitations**

Four important limitations of the study warrant brief mention. First, some subgroups of liable mothers were small. This restricted the statistical tests that could be used and may have obscured associations between variables that would have been significant with a larger sample (technically termed ‘Type II’ error). Further, some significant findings among very small subgroups (for example, all eight liable mothers with a private agreement were compliant) may have occurred by chance (‘Type I’ error).

Second, conclusions about gender and intensive mothering assumed specific expectations of ‘good’ mothering that gave less attention to diverse norms of mothering and to the intersection with race, ethnicity and sexual identity.

Third, no questions were asked about personal values and attitudes about parenting and role identity. Adherence to gendered expectations of ‘good’ mothering was inferred by answers to other questions. Thus, intensity of mothering was based on quantity of parenting-time, a proxy measure.

Fourth, parents who had never lived together were under-represented in the present study.¹⁷² This is because the sample extraction was based on ‘date of separation’ and never-lived together parents mostly did not have a date of separation. This under-representation could exclude some younger parents with higher disadvantage in liable-father cases and may have under-estimated the socio-demographic differences between liable parents.

The present study nonetheless makes an important contribution to improving understanding of liable mothers—a rarely studied group of separated parents. The CSRS data are a representative sample drawn from, and weighted to be representative of, active cases in the child support administrative caseload.

10.6 **Future research**

This thesis contributes to the patchy evidence base on child support compliance in general and to sparsely investigated gendered differences in non-compliance and in-kind contributions. It identifies that non-compliant liable mothers could be seen as ‘engaged non-compliers’. Low compliance reported by payee fathers here and in other recent research could mask the contribution that mothers are making informally.

Several specific lines of investigation are warranted to improve understanding of liable-mother cases and could be further explored with a larger sample. For example, while non-compliance in the present study was measured as not in full and/or not on time, differences could exist between types of non-compliance: late, partial payment, none of the liability paid. This is particularly relevant in Private Collect cases.¹⁷³

Another important line of inquiry to pursue is compliance over time.

Research using administrative data could follow liable-mother cases to explore whether changes in time with children or income was the main

¹⁷² The sample comprised 1.5% of never lived together parents.

¹⁷³ In contrast to liable fathers, liable mothers had a similar rate of compliance in Private Collect and when DHS was involved in collecting and disbursing payment.

driver for movement between liable parent and payee role and how frequent this occurred in individual cases. This could draw out the policy implications of this more dynamic situation compared with liable-father cases where traditional parenting arrangements and static liable parent/payee roles apply and inform service delivery for parents who move between liable parent, payee and no current liability. Focus groups or other qualitative approaches with a sample of these parents could identify whether any additional support was required, and if so, the type of support needed, and whether DHS or the community sector could best meet this need.

Qualitative or mixed method research would provide richer data for a range of new topics arising from the present study: shared-time liable mothers where they had the greater time; split-residence; attitudes to paying child support and non-compliance; and whether liable mothers and payee fathers identify the same meanings to child support monies as found for payee mothers and liable fathers (see, for example, Natalier & Hewitt 2014). Further, in-depth interviews could explore the meaning of child support monies for mothers who had been a payee and were currently a liable parent. This could provide insight into perceptions of being liable, and compliance, for mothers with episodic versus ongoing liability.

Further work on a more inclusive compliance measure, such as the ‘soft’ compliance measure developed for the present study and used by Smyth, Vnuk and others (2014) encompassing in-kind contributions, agreed non-payment and whether the payee is satisfied with the arrangements, would lead to a stronger understanding of on-the-ground compliance for liable-mother cases, and also for the larger group of liable-father cases.

10.7 Parting reflections

Family law, and child support policy, has increasingly moved to the use of non-gendered family-friendly language, reflecting the changing nature of parenting roles, expectations and responsibilities. As Behrens (2010: 37) points out, policy analysis needs to consider ‘the gendered lives we

continue to live... implications for the power and choices we have, ...[and] the tendency for there to be different expectations of self-sacrifice'. The data presented show that liable mothers are a distinct group within the liable parent population and suggest that child support compliance behaviour is indeed gendered. Consequently, it is important for research, policy and practice to not become 'gender blind'. This is an especially important point in the light of the marked shift in the caseload and the Child Support Program's philosophy of encouraging separated parents to make their own arrangements. All is assumed by policymakers to be okay. Key aspects of these data fly in the face of this assumption.

Bibliography

- Abrego, L 2009, 'Economic well-being in Salvadoran transnational families: How gender affects remittance practices', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 71, pp. 1070–85.
- Adema, W 2013, 'Greater gender equality. What role for family policy?', *Family Matters*, no. 93, pp. 7–16.
- Administrative Office of the Courts California 2000, *Research Update: Children's residence five years after mediation*, Judicial Council of California.
- Ahrons, C 2011, 'Commentary on Reconsidering the "Good Divorce"', *Family Relations*, vol. 60, pp. 528–32.
- Ajzen, I 2002, 'Perceived behavioral control, self-efficacy, locus of control, and the theory of planned behavior', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 32, pp. 665–83.
- Alderson-Gill and Associates 1999, *Research Strategy for Studying Compliance/Default on Child Support Orders*, CSR–1998–2E, Department of Justice Canada.
- 2003, *Research on Compliance with Child Support Orders and Agreements in Prince Edward Island*, 2003–FCY–IE, Department of Justice Canada.
- Allen, KR & Baber, KM 1992, 'Ethical and epistemological tensions in applying a postmodern perspective to feminist research', *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 1–15.
- Amato, PR 2010, 'Fathers, children and divorce', in ME Lamb (ed.), *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken NJ, pp. 177–200.
- Andrews, S, Armstrong, D, McLernon, L, Megaw, S & Skinner, C 2011, *Promotion of Child Maintenance: Research on instigating behaviour change. Vol I. Main Report*, Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, London.
- Arditti, JA 1995, 'Noncustodial parents: Emergent issues of diversity and process', *Marriage & Family Review*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 283–304.
- Arditti, JA & Keith, TZ 1993, 'Visitation frequency, child support payment, and the father–child relationship postdivorce', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 55, no. 3, pp. 699–712.
- Arditti, JA & Madden-Derdich, DA 1993, 'Noncustodial mothers: Developing strategies of support', *Family Relations*, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 305–14.
- Arendell, T 1999, *Hegemonic Motherhood: Deviancy discourses and employed mothers' accounts of out-of-school time issues*, Working Paper No. 9, Center for Working Families, University of California, Berkeley.
- 2000, 'Conceiving and investigating motherhood: The decade's scholarship', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 62, no. 4, pp. 1192–207.
- Atkinson, A & McKay, S 2005, *Investigating the Compliance of Child Support Agency Clients*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No 285, HMSO, Leeds.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997, *Family Characteristics, Australia April 1997*, 4442.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- 2004, *Family Characteristics, Australia June 2003*, 4442.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- 2006, *Australian Social Trends 2006*, 4102.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- 2008, *Family Characteristics and Transitions, Australia 2006–07*, 4442.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- 2010, *Measures of Australia's Progress, 2010* 1370.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- 2011, *Family Characteristics, Australia 2009–10*, 4442.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- 2015, *Family Characteristics and Transitions, Australia 2012–13*, 4442.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- 2017, *Labour Force, Australia: Labour force status and other characteristics of families, June 2016*, 6224.0.55.001.

- Australian Government 2005, *A New Family Law System. Government response to Every Picture Tells a Story. Response to the Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Inquiry into Child-Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation*, Canberra.
- 2016, *Response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs report: From conflict to cooperation – Inquiry into the Child Support Program*, Department of Social Services, <<https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children/publications-articles/australian-government-response-to-the-house-of-representatives-standing-committee-on-social-policy-and-legal-affairs-report-from-conflict-to-cooperation-inquiry-into-the-child-support-program>>.
- Australian Law Reform Commission 2011, *Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws—Improving legal frameworks*, ALRC Report 117, Sydney.
- Australian Public Service Commission 2007, *Tackling Wicked Problems. A public policy perspective*, Australian Public Service Commission, Canberra.
- 2009, *Smarter Policy: Choosing policy instruments and working with others to influence behaviour*, Australian Public Service Commission, Canberra.
- Babcock, GM 1995, 'Long distance mothers: Attributions and consequences of nonresidential mothering', PhD thesis, Washington State University.
- 1998, 'Stigma, identity dissonance, and the nonresidential mother', *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 139–56.
- Bagshaw, D, Brown, T, Wendt, S, Campbell, A, McInnes, E, Tinning, B, Batagol, B, Sifris, A, Tyson, D, Baker, J & Fernandez Arias, P 2010, *Family Violence and Family Law in Australia. The experiences and views of children and adults from families who separated post 1995 and post 2006. Volume 1*, Attorney General's Department, Canberra.
- Bailey, SJ 2003, 'Challenges and strengths in nonresidential parenting following divorce', *Marriage & Family Review*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 29–44.
- Bailey, SJ & Zvonkovic, AM 2003, 'Parenting after divorce', *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 59–80.
- Baker, R & Bishop, B 2003, 'Non-resident parents: The forgotten partners in children's education', *Nuance*, vol. 14, pp. 35–48.
- 2005, 'Nonresident parents: Nonresident mothers, schools and the reform process', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 205–15.
- Bakker, W & Karsten, L 2013, 'Balancing paid work, care and leisure in post-separation households: A comparison of single parents with co-parents', *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 56, pp. 173–87.
- Bakker, W & Mulder, CH 2009, 'Exploring living arrangements of divorced families in the Netherlands', paper presented to 7th Meeting of the European Network for the Sociological and Demographic Study of Divorce, Antwerp, 25–26 June 2009.
- 2013, 'Characteristics of post-separation families in the Netherlands: shared residence versus resident mother arrangements', *GeoJournal*, vol. 78, no. 5, pp. 851–66.
- Basham, K 1990, 'Moral courage and noncustodial mothering: A study of interactional and cognitive perspectives', PhD thesis, Smith College.
- Bassin, D, Honey, M & Kaplan, M 1994, 'Introduction', in D Bassin, M Honey & M Kaplan (eds), *Representations of Motherhood*, Yale University Press, New Haven, pp. 1–25.
- Baxter, J 2013a, *Employment Characteristics and Transitions of Mothers in the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*, Department of Social Services Occasional Paper No. 50, Canberra.
- 2013b, *Parents Working Out Work. Australian Family Trends No. 1*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- 2017, *Stay-at-home dads (Facts Sheet)*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Baxter, J, Gray, M, Hand, K & Hayes, A 2012, *Parental Joblessness, Financial Disadvantage and the Wellbeing of Parents and Children*, FaHCSIA Occasional Paper No. 48, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

- Baxter, J & Hewitt, B 2013, 'Negotiating domestic labor: Women's earnings and housework time in Australia', *Feminist Economics*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 29–53.
- Baxter, J & Renda, J 2011, 'Lone and couple mothers in the Australian labour market: Differences in employment transitions', *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 103–22.
- Becerra, R & Ong, P 2001, *The Noncustodial Parent: Employment, earnings, child support, parenting*, The Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, California.
- Behrens, J 2010, 'Family violence and its relevance beyond safety: Some reflections on the Chisholm Report', *Family Law Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 31–9.
- Behrens, J, Smyth, B & Kaspiew, R 2009, 'Australian family law court decisions on relocation: Dynamics in parents' relationships across time', *Australian Journal of Family Law*, vol. 23, pp. 222–46.
- Bell, A, Kazimirski, A & La Valle, I 2006, *An Investigation of CSA Maintenance Direct Payments Qualitative study*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No. 327, HMSO, Leeds.
- Bemiller, M 2005, 'Mothering on the margins: The experience of noncustodial mothers', PhD thesis, University of Akron.
- 2008, 'When battered mothers lose custody: A qualitative study of abuse at home and in the courts', *Journal of Child Custody*, vol. 5, no. 3–4, pp. 228–55.
- 2010, 'Mothering from a distance', *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, vol. 51, no. 3, pp. 169–84.
- Berke, P, Black, M, Byrne, M, Fields, F, Gallagher, B & Paley, N 1979, 'A study of natural mothers who terminate the primary parental role', Masters thesis, University of Southern California.
- Berns, S 1993, 'Towards a theory of relational equality', *University of New South Wales Law Journal*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 394–432.
- Bickerdike, A, Gee, T, Ilgauskas, R, Melvin, T & Hearn, J 2009, *Men and Separation. Navigating the future*, 2nd edn, Relationships Australia (Victoria), MensLine Australia, beyondblue, Melbourne.
- Birks, S 2011, 'An assessment of the proposed changes to the child support formula', *Policy Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 31–8.
- Bitá, N 2015, '"Deadbeat dads" face fines in sweeping changes to child support', *The Australian*, no. 17 July, viewed 9 March 2018, <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/deadbeat-dads-face-fines-in-sweeping-changes-to-child-support/news-story/e9e053d9e48dc6f753cbd1d0bba3f1c8>>.
- Blamey, R & Sutton, T 1999, 'Social marketing and regulatory compliance', *Social Marketing Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 25–33.
- Boden, R & Corden, A 1998, *Self-employed Parents and Child Maintenance*, HMSO, London.
- Bowen, C 2010, 'Opening address from the Minister for Human Services', paper presented to Lone Fathers Association National Conference, Parliament House Canberra, 16 June 2010.
- Braaf, R & Meyering, IB 2011, *Seeking Security: Promoting women's economic wellbeing following domestic violence* Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney.
- Bradbury, B & Norris, K 2005, 'Income and separation', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 41, no. 4, pp. 425–46.
- Bradshaw, J, Stimson, C, Skinner, C & Williams, J 1999, *Absent Fathers?*, Routledge, London.
- Braver, S, Ellman, IM & MacCoun, R 2014, 'Public intuition about fair child support allocations: Converging evidence for a "fair shares" rule', *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 146–63.
- Braver, S, Fitzpatrick, PJ & Bay, RC 1991, 'Noncustodial parents' reports of child support payments', *Family Relations*, vol. 49, pp. 180–5.

- Braver, S, Griffin, WA, Cookston, J, Sandler, I & Williams, J 2005, 'Promoting better fathering among divorced nonresident fathers', in WM Pinsof & J Lebow (eds), *Family Psychology: The art of the science*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 295–325.
- Braver, S, Wolchik, S, Sandler, I, Fogas, B & Zvetina, D 1991, 'Frequency of visitation by divorced fathers: Differences in reports by fathers and mothers', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, vol. 61, no. 3, pp. 448–54.
- Brennan, Z 1999, 'CSA chases 52,000 missing mothers', *The Sunday Times*, 17 July.
- Broderick, E 2012, 'Applying a gender perspective in public policy: What it means and how we can do it better', paper presented to Addressing Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Public Policy, International Women's Day Forum Australian Public Service Human Rights Network Meeting, Canberra, 9 March 2012, <<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/applying-gender-perspective-public-policy-what-it-means-and-how-we-can-do-it-better>>.
- Broomhill, R & Sharp, R 2005, 'The changing male breadwinner model in Australia: A new gender order', *Labour and Industry*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 103–27.
- Brown, P & Cook, ST 2011, *Children's Placement Arrangements in Divorce and Paternity Cases in Wisconsin*, Institute for Research on Poverty University of Wisconsin–Madison
- Brown, P, Joung, EH & Berger, LM 2006, *Divorced Wisconsin Families with Shared Child Placements*, Institute for Research on Poverty University of Wisconsin–Madison
- Buchanan, C, Maccoby, EE & Dornbusch, S 1992, 'Adolescents and their families after divorce: Three residential arrangements compared', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 261–91.
- Burkinshaw, P 2013, 'Book reviews: Feminism counts: quantitative methods and researching gender', *Gender and Education*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 236–41.
- Burns, A 1980, *Breaking Up. Separation and divorce in Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne.
- Buskens, P 2002, 'From perfect housewife to fishnet stockings and not quite back again. One mother's story of leaving home', *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 33–45.
- 2005, 'When Eve left the garden. A modern tale about mothers who leave their families', in M Porter, P Short & A O'Reilly (eds), *Motherhood: Power and Oppression*, Women's Press, Toronto, pp. 265–83.
- Cabinet Subcommittee on Maintenance 1986, *Child Support. A discussion paper on child maintenance*, AGPS, Canberra.
- Cancian, M & Meyer, DR 1998, 'Who gets custody?', *Demography*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 147–57.
- Caruana, C & Ferro, A 2004, 'Points of convergence', in B Smyth (ed.), *Parent–Child Contact and Post-separation Parenting Arrangements*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 103–9.
- Cashmore, J, Parkinson, P, Weston, R, Patulny, R, Redmond, G, Qu, L, Baxter, J, Rajkovic, M, Sitek, T & Katz, I 2010, *Shared Care Parenting Arrangements Since the 2006 Family Law Reforms: Report to the Australian Government Attorney General's Department*, Social Policy Research Centre University of NSW, Sydney.
- Cass, B 1993, 'Sole parent family policy in Australia: Income support and labour market issues', paper presented to Social Policy Agency Seminar, Canberra, 9 February 1993
- Cassells, R, Toohey, M, Keegan, M & Mohanty, I 2013, *Modern Families. The changing shape of Australian families*, AMP: NATSEM Income and Wealth Report Issue 34, NATSEM, Canberra.
- Chafetz, JS 2004, 'Bridging feminist theory and research methodology', *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 25, no. 7, pp. 963–77.
- Cheng, S & Powell, B 2005, 'Small samples, big challenges: Studying atypical family forms', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 67, no. 4, pp. 926–35.
- Chesler, P 1986, *Mothers on Trial*, McGraw Hill, New York.

- Child Support Agency 1996, *Child Support Agency Facts and Figures Data to June 1996*, Child Support Agency, Canberra.
- 1999, *CSA Community Perception Survey: Results and analysis*, CSA Research and Policy Unit Paper 2/99 Child Support Agency, Canberra
- 2001, *Evaluation of the Introduction of a \$260 Minimum Child Support Assessment*, Child Support Agency Client Research Unit, Canberra.
- 2006, *Getting Started. Information about child support for separated parents*, Canberra.
- 2008, *CSA: Supporting parents to meet their child support responsibilities 2008–2010*, Child Support Agency, Canberra.
- 2009a, *Facts and Figures 08–09*, Child Support Agency, Canberra.
- 2009b, *Facts and Figures 2007–08*, Child Support Agency Canberra.
- 2010, *CSA: Supporting parents to meet their child support responsibilities 2010–2012 Compliance Program*, Child Support Agency, Canberra.
- 2011, *Separated mums paying more than ever before* [media release], Canberra, 8 March, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/131192/20111216-1102/www.csa.gov.au/media/media_releases/2011/03/8_march_2011_-_separated_mums_paying_more_than_ever_before.html>.
- Child Support Consultative Group 1988, *Child Support: Formula for Australia*, AGPS, Canberra.
- Child Support Evaluation Advisory Group 1992, *Child Support in Australia: Final Report of the evaluation of the Child Support Scheme*, AGPS, Canberra.
- Christensen, DH, Dahl, C & Rettig, K 1990, 'Noncustodial mothers and child support: Examining the larger context', *Family Relations*, vol. 39, pp. 388–94.
- Christopher, K 2012, 'Extensive mothering: Employed mothers' constructions of the good mother', *Gender & Society*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 73–96.
- Churchman, CW 1967, 'Wicked problems', *Management Science*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. B141–2.
- Clumpus, L 1996, 'No-woman's land: The story of non-custodial mothers', *Feminism & Psychology*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 237–44.
- Coleman, M (ed.) 2016, *A Gender Lens Budget 2016–17*, National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW) Canberra.
- (ed.) 2017, *Gender Lens on the Budget 2017–18* National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW), Canberra.
- Coley, RL & Morris, JE 2002, 'Comparing mother and father reports of father involvement among low-income minority families', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 64, pp. 982–97.
- Collins, PH 1994, 'Shifting the center: Race, class and feminist theorizing about motherhood', in E Glenn, G Chang & L Forcey (eds), *Mothering. Ideology, Experience and Agency*, Routledge, New York, pp. 45–65.
- Colmar Brunton 2009, *New Zealand Child Support Arrangements. A research report prepared for the Families Commission*, Families Commission, Wellington.
- Coltrane, S & Hickman, N 1992, 'The rhetoric of rights and needs: Moral discourse in the reform of child custody and child support laws', *Social Problems*, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 400–30.
- Constantatos, M 1984, 'Noncustodial versus custodial divorced mothers: Antecedents and consequences of custody choice', PhD thesis, University of Texas.
- Cook, K, McKenzie, HJ, Natalier, K & Young, L 2015, 'Institutional processes and the production of gender inequalities: The case of Australian child support research and administration', *Critical Social Policy*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 512–34.
- Cook, K & Natalier, K 2012, 'Child support compliance in Australia: Are children's best interests represented in the policymaking process?', paper presented to Children's Rights. What's Right for Children. The Association of Children's Welfare Agencies Conference Sydney, 20–22 August 2012
- 2013, 'The gendered framing of Australia's child support reforms', *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 28–50.

- 2016, 'Gender and evidence in family law reform: A case study of quantification and anecdote in framing and legitimising the "problems" with child support in Australia', *Feminist Legal Studies*, vol. 24, pp. 147–67.
- Cook, ST & Brown, P 2006, *Recent Trends in Children's Placement Arrangements in Divorce and Paternity Cases in Wisconsin*, Institute for Research on Poverty University of Madison–Wisconsin.
- Corlyon, J, Gieve, M, Stock, L & Sandamas, C 2009, *Separated Families: How mainstream services support disadvantaged children and their non-resident parents*, Tavistock Institute London.
- Cozzolino, EA 2014, 'The Social and Relational Meaning of Child Support', M.A. thesis, University of Texas.
- Craig, L 2006, 'Does father care mean father share? A comparison of how mothers and fathers in intact families spend time with children', *Gender & Society*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 259–81.
- Craig, L, Mullan, K & Blaxland, M 2010, 'Parenthood, policy and work–family time in Australia 1992–2006', *Work, Employment and Society*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 27–35.
- Dads on the Air 2008, *Double standards?*, dadsontheair.com, viewed 10 December 2008, <<http://forum.dadsontheair.com/viewtopic.php?t=31416>>.
- Davis, G & Wikeley, N 2002, 'National Survey of Child Support Agency Clients – the relationship dimensions', *Family Law*, vol. 32, pp. 522–7.
- de Irala, J, Navajas, RF-C & del Castillo, AS 1997, 'Abnormally wide confidence intervals in logistic regression: interpretation of statistical program results', *Public Health*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 268–71.
- De Maio, J, Kaspiew, R, Smart, D, Dunstan, J & Moore, S 2013, *Survey of Recently Separated Parents. A study of parents who separated prior to the implementation of the Family Law Amendment (Family Violence and Other Matters) Act 2011*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- de Vaus, D 2004, 'Step and blended families', in D de Vaus (ed.), *Diversity and Change in Australian Families*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 60–4.
- de Vaus, D, Gray, M, Qu, L & Stanton, D 2009, 'The effect of relationship breakdown on income and social exclusion', paper presented to Australian Social Policy Conference Sydney, 8–10 July 2009.
- 2015, *The Economic Consequences of Divorce in Six OECD Countries*, Research Report No. 31, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2008, *Report on the Population Impact of the New Child Support Formula*, FaHCSIA, Canberra, viewed 24 November 2016, <<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/report-on-the-population-impact-of-the-new-child-support-formula>>.
- 2009, *Update to the Population Impact of the New Child Support Formula*, FaHCSIA, Canberra, viewed 24 November 2016, <<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/updated-report-on-the-population-impact-of-the-new-child-support-formula-july-2009>>.
- 2010a, *Changes to the Child Support Population: Actual transfers modelling* FaHCSIA, Canberra, viewed 24 November 2016, <<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/analysis-of-child-support-reforms/changes-to-the-child-support-population-actual-transfers-modelling>>.
- 2010b, *Changes to the Child Support Population: Distributional impact modelling*, FaHCSIA, Canberra, viewed 24 November 2016, <<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/analysis-of-child-support-reforms/changes-to-the-child-support-population-distributional-impact-modelling>>.
- Department of Family and Community Services 2003, *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements*

- in the Event of Family Separation*, Submission No. 1251 Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Department of Human Services 2014, *Parliamentary Inquiry into the Child Support Program*, Submission 99.4 Supplementary Submission, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Department of Social Services 2015, *Annual Report 2014–15*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Department of Social Services & Department of Human Services 2014 *Joint Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into the Child Support Program*, Submission No. 99, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra
- Depner, CE 1993, 'Parental role reversal. Mothers as nonresidential parents', in CE Depner & JH Bray (eds), *Nonresidential Parenting. New vistas in family living*, Sage, California, pp. 37–57.
- Deutsch, F 2007, 'Undoing gender', *Gender & Society*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 106–27.
- Dewar, J, Sheehan, G & Hughes, J 1999, *Superannuation and Divorce in Australia*, AIFS Working Paper No. 18, Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne.
- Dick, T 1998, 'She gave as good as she got? Family violence, interim custody/residence and the Family Court', *Queensland University of Technology Law Journal*, vol. 14, pp. 40–72.
- Doherty, WJ, Kouneski, EF & Erickson, MF 1998, 'Responsible fathering: An overview and conceptual framework', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 60, no. 2, pp. 277–92.
- Doucet, A 2006, *Do Men Mother? Fathering, care, and domestic responsibility*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- 2013, 'Gender roles and fathering', in N Cabrera & C Tamis-LeMonda (eds), *Handbook of Father Involvement. Multidisciplinary perspectives*, Routledge, New York, pp. 297–319.
- Doucet, A & Lee, R 2014, 'Fathering, feminism(s), gender, and sexualities: Connections, tensions, and new pathways', *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, vol. 6, pp. 355–73.
- Downey, DB 1994, 'The school performance of children from single-mother and single-father families: Economic or interpersonal deprivation?', *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 129–47.
- 1995, 'Understanding academic achievement among children in stephouseholds: The role of parental resources, sex of stepparent, and sex of child', *Social Forces*, vol. 73, no. 3, pp. 875–94.
- Downey, DB, Ainsworth-Darnell, JW & Dufur, MJ 1998, 'Sex of parent and children's well-being in single-parent households', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 60, no. 4, pp. 878–93.
- Dubey, S 1995, 'A study of reasons for non-payment of child support by non-custodial parents', *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 115–31.
- Dudley, JR 1991, 'Exploring ways to get divorced fathers to comply willingly with child support agreements', *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, vol. 14, pp. 121–35.
- Eardley, T & Griffiths, M 2009, *Non-resident Parents and Service Use*, SPRC Report No. 12/09, Social Policy Research Centre Sydney.
- Ebaugh, HRF 1988, *Becoming an Ex*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Edwards, H 1989, *How Could You? Mothers without custody of their children*, The Crossing Press, Freedom, California.
- Edwards, M, Howard, C & Miller, R 2001, 'From child maintenance to child support: An unlikely policy reform', in M Edwards, C Howard & R Miller (eds), *Social Policy, Public Policy: From problem to practice*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, pp. 57–96.
- Eicher-Catt, D 2004, 'Noncustodial mothering: A cultural paradox of competent performance—performative competence', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 72–108.
- Elizabeth, V 2017, 'Custody stalking: A mechanism of coercively controlling mothers following separation', *Feminist Legal Studies*, vol. online first.

- Elizabeth, V, Gavey, N & Tolmie, J 2012, "...He's just swapped his fists for the system". The governance of gender through custody law', *Gender & Society*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 239–60.
- Ellison, C 2007, *Fathers playing greater role as primary carers after separation [media release]*, Minister for Human Services, Canberra, March,
<<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/65939/20071024-0026/www.mhs.gov.au/media-releases/0703/070326.html>>.
- Ennis, LR 2014, 'Intensive mothering: Revisiting the issue today', in LR Ennis (ed.), *Intensive Mothering. The cultural contradictions of modern motherhood*, Demeter Press, Bradford.
- Esler, M, Robertson, J & Shipley, M 2010, 'Indigenous families and their engagement with the child support system', paper presented to Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference Melbourne, 7–9 July 2010.
- Estin, AL 1995, 'Love and obligation: Family law and the romance of economics', *William and Mary Law Review*, vol. 36, pp. 989–1087.
- Family Court of Australia 2009, *Shared Parental Responsibility*, Family Court of Australia, Canberra.
- Fehlberg, B 2004, 'Family finances, law and policy', paper presented to Families, Law and Social Policy Network Meeting, Brisbane, 25 November 2004
- 2008, 'Post-separation parenting and financial settlements: The long-term financial impacts of shared care', paper presented to Shared Parenting Seminar, Adelaide, 13–15 April 2008.
- Fehlberg, B & Maclean, M 2009, 'Child support policy in Australia and the United Kingdom: Changing priorities but a similar tough deal for children?', *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 1–24.
- Fehlberg, B & Millward, C 2013, 'Post-separation parenting and financial arrangements over time. Recent qualitative findings', *Family Matters*, no. 92, pp. 29–40.
- 2014, 'Family violence and financial outcomes after parental separation', in A Hayes & D Higgins (eds), *Families, Policy and the Law: Selected essays on contemporary issues for Australia* Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 235–43.
- Fehlberg, B, Millward, C & Campo, M 2009a, 'Post-separation parenting, financial settlements and children's best interests', paper presented to Melbourne Law School Research Workshop Series, Melbourne, 17 August 2009.
- 2009b, 'Shared post-separation parenting in 2009: An empirical snapshot', *Australian Journal of Family Law*, vol. 23, pp. 247–75.
- 2010, 'Post-separation parenting arrangements, child support and property settlement: Exploring the connections', *Australian Journal of Family Law*, vol. 24, pp. 214–41.
- Fehlberg, B, Millward, C, Campo, M & Carson, R 2013, 'Post-separation parenting and financial arrangements: Exploring changes over time', *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 359–80.
- Fehlberg, B & Smyth, B 2000, 'Child support and parent–child contact', *Family Matters*, no. 57, pp. 20–5.
- Ferguson, SK 1994, 'Mothers without children: Implications for practice', *Affilia*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 401–16.
- Fien, J & Wilson, S 2014, *Leadership Tools for Wicked Problems*, Working Paper No. 3, Swinburne Leadership Institute, Melbourne.
- Fineman, M 1991, *The Illusion of Equality*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Fischer, JL 1983, 'Mothers living apart from their children', *Family Relations*, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 351–7.
- Fischer, JL & Cardea, J 1982, 'Mother–child relationships of mothers living apart from their children', *Alternative Lifestyles*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 42–53.
- Fish, E, McKenzie, M & MacDonald, H 2009, *"Bad Mothers and Invisible Fathers". Parenting in the context of domestic violence*, Discussion Paper No. 7, Domestic Violence Centre, Victoria

- Fletcher, R 2011, 'The mystery of stay-at-home dads', *The Conversation*, viewed 25 November 2011, <<http://theconversation.edu.au/the-mystery-of-stay-at-home-dads-4099>>.
- Fogarty, K & Augoustinos, M 2008, 'Feckless fathers and monopolizing mothers: Motive, identity, and fundamental truths in the Australian Public Inquiry into Child Custody', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 47, pp. 535–56.
- Folbre, N 1994, *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the structures of constraint* Routledge, New York.
- Fox, GL & Murry, VM 2000, 'Gender and families: Feminist perspectives and family research', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 62, no. 4, pp. 1160–72.
- Franks, H 1990, *Mummy Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, Transworld Publishing, London.
- Funder, K 1993, 'Exploring the access–maintenance nexus', in K Funder, M Harrison & R Weston (eds), *Settling Down: Pathways of Parents After Divorce*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 175–91.
- 1998, 'The Australian Family Law Reform Act 1995 and public attitudes to parental responsibility', *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 47–61.
- Funder, K, Harrison, M & Weston, R (eds) 1993, *Settling Down: Pathways of Parents After Divorce*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Funder, K & Smyth, B 1996a, *Family Law Evaluation Project 1996. Parental responsibilities: Two national surveys*, AGPS, Canberra.
- 1996b, 'Family law reforms and attitudes to parental responsibility', *Family Matters*, no. 45, pp. 10–5.
- Garcia, KK 2012, 'The gender bind: Men as inauthentic caregivers', *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 1–43.
- Glubka, S 1983, 'Out of the stream: An essay on unconventional motherhood', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 223–34.
- Goode, J, Callender, C & Lister, R 1998, *Purse or Wallet? Gender inequalities and income distribution within families on benefits*, Policy Studies Institute, London.
- Goodwin, S & Huppertz, K 2010, *The Good Mother. Contemporary motherhoods in Australia*, Sydney University Press, Sydney.
- Graham, JW & Beller, AH 2002, 'Nonresident fathers and their children: Child support and visitation from an economic perspective', in C Tamis-LeMonda & N Cabrera (eds), *Handbook of Father Involvement. Multidisciplinary perspectives*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, New Jersey, pp. 431–53.
- Grall, T 2011, *Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2009*, US Census Bureau, viewed 11 November 2011, <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-240.pdf>>.
- 2013, *Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2011*, US Census Bureau, viewed 14 October 2016, <<https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p60-246.pdf>>.
- 2016, *Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2013*, US Census Bureau, Washington.
- Green, B & Pearce, I 2002, 'The criminalisation of women: The impact and implications of financial abuse', paper presented to 3rd Australasian Women and Policing Conference Canberra, 20–23 October 2002.
- Greenland, S, Schwartzbaum, JA & Finkle, WD 2000, 'Problems due to small samples and sparse data in conditional logistic regression analysis', *American Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 151, no. 5, pp. 531–9.
- Gregory, B 2002, 'Can this be the Promised Land? Work and welfare for the modern woman', *Dissent*, no. 9, pp. 43–50.
- Greif, G 1986, 'Mothers without custody and child support', *Family Relations*, vol. 35, pp. 87–93.
- 1997a, *Out of Touch: When parents and children lose contact after divorce*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

- 1997b, 'Working with noncustodial mothers', *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, vol. 78, pp. 46–51.
- Greif, G & Emad, F 1989, 'A longitudinal examination of mothers without custody: Implication for treatment', *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 155–63.
- Greif, G & Pabst, M 1988, *Mothers Without Custody*, Lexington Books, Lexington, Massachusetts.
- Griffin, M 2011, 'More mums pay child support', *The Age*, 11 March, p. 7.
- Gringeri, C, Wahab, S & Anderson-Nathe, B 2010, 'What makes it feminist?: Mapping the landscape of feminist social work research', *Affilia*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 390–405.
- Gunnoe, ML 1993, 'Noncustodial mothers' and fathers' contributions to the adjustment of adolescent stepchildren', PhD thesis, University of Virginia.
- Gustafson, D 2001, 'Unbecoming behaviour. One woman's story of becoming a non-custodial mother', *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 203–12.
- Ha, Y, Cancian, M & Meyer, DR 2011, 'The regularity of child support and its contribution to the regularity of income', *Social Service Review*, vol. 85, no. 3, pp. 401–19.
- Haberfield, I & Wright, L 2006, 'Millions owing in child support', *Sunday Telegraph*, 6 August, p. 19.
- Hahn, M & Wilkins, R 2014, 'Family circumstances and care arrangements of children', in R Wilkins (ed.), *Families, Incomes and Jobs, Volume 9. A statistical report on wave 1 to 11 of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey*, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economics and Social Research, Melbourne, pp. 9–15.
- Hakovirta, M & Rantalaaho, M 2011, 'Family policy and shared parenting in Nordic countries', *European Journal of Social Security*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 247–66.
- Hall, LA, Passarella, LL & Born, CE 2014, *Who Pays Child Support? Noncustodial parents' payment compliance*, Family Welfare Research & Training Group, University of Maryland.
- Hancock, L 1998, 'Reforming the child support agenda?: Who benefits?', *Just Policy*, no. 12, pp. 20–31.
- Harding, A & Szukalska, A 2000, 'Social policy matters: The changing face of child poverty in Australia, 1982 to 1997/98', paper presented to 7th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, 26 July 2000
<http://natsem.canberra.edu.au/publications/search-by-author/?publication=social-policy-matters-the-changing-face-of-child-poverty-in-australia-1982-to-1997-98>.
- Harrison, M 1993, 'Patterns of maintenance payment over time', in K Funder, M Harrison & R Weston (eds), *Settling Down: Pathways of Parents After Divorce*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 116–34.
- Harrison, M, Snider, G & Merlo, R 1990, *Who Pays for the Children? A first look at the operations of Australia's new child support scheme*, AIFS Monograph No. 9, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Harrison, M, Snider, G, Merlo, R & Lucchesi, V 1991, *Paying For the Children. Parent and employer experiences of Stage One of the Child Support Scheme*, AIFS Monograph No. 10, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Hart, S 2008, *A Mother Apart*, Crown House Publishing, Carmarthen, Wales.
- Haugen, GMD 2003, 'Children's perspectives on the meaning of money in post-divorce families', paper presented to 6th European Sociology Association Conference Murcia, Spain, 23–26 September 2003.
- Hawkins, DN, Amato, PR & King, V 2006, 'Parent–adolescent involvement: The relative influence of parent gender and residence', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 125–36.
- Hawthorne, B 2000, 'Split custody as a viable post-divorce option', *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, vol. 33, no. 3–4, pp. 1–19.

- 2005, 'Australian nonresident fathers. Attributes influencing their engagement with their children', PhD thesis, University of Sydney.
- Hawthorne, B & Lennings, CJ 2008, 'The marginalization of nonresident fathers: Their postdivorce roles', *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 191–209.
- Hays, S 1996, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Head, B 2010, "'Wicked" problems revisited: Can we successfully tackle complex problems?', paper presented to Social Policy Research Centre Seminar, Sydney, 4 May 2010.
- Headey, B & Warren, D 2008, 'Contact between non-resident parents and their children', in B Headey & D Warren (eds), *Families, Incomes and Jobs, Volume 2, A Statistical Report on Waves 1 to 4 of the HILDA Survey*, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economics and Social Research, Melbourne, pp. 14–6.
- Headey, B, Warren, D & Harding, G 2006, 'Contact between non-resident parents and their children', in B Headey, D Warren & G Harding (eds), *Families, Incomes and Jobs: A Statistical Report of the HILDA Survey*, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic Research, Melbourne, pp. 16–8.
- Heeringa, SG, West, BT & Berglund, PA 2010, *Applied Survey Data Analysis*, Chapman & Hall/CRC Statistics in the Social and Behavioral Science Series, Boca Raton, FL.
- Heikes, EJ 1993, 'Single custodial fathers and noncustodial mothers: Role-making, biography, and gender in the negotiation of parenthood', PhD thesis, University of Texas.
- Heron, A 1987, 'Making fathers pay?', *Legal Service Bulletin*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 17–20.
- Herrerias, C 1984, 'Noncustodial mothers: A study of self-concept and social interactions', PhD thesis, University of Texas.
- 1995, 'Noncustodial mothers following divorce', *Marriage and Family Review*, vol. 20, no. 1–2, pp. 233–55.
- 2008, 'Inequities faced by noncustodial mothers', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Feminist Thought*, vol. 3, no. 1: Article 3, pp. 1–25
- Hewitt, B & Natalier, K 2010, 'Flip sides of the same coin: Similarities and differences in mothers' and fathers' perceptions of "appropriate" uses of child support monies', paper presented to Australian Sociological Association Conference, Sydney, 6–9 December 2010.
- Hiilamo, H 2006, 'Child support in Sweden and Finland', paper presented to One Parent Families Seminar Re-thinking Child Support: Lessons from abroad, London, 24 May 2006.
- Hockey, J 2006, *Crackdown on dead-beats who hide income from the CSA [media release]*, Minister for Human Services, Canberra, 19 June.
- Horwood, J 2004, *Parenthood and Child Support in the Christchurch Health and Development Study Cohort: Summary of findings at age 25 years*, Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Science.
- Hosmer, DW & Lemeshow, S 2000, *Applied Logistic Regression*, 2nd edn, John Wiley and Sons Inc, New York.
- House of Representatives 2006, *Debates (Speaker Joe Hockey)*, Canberra, 19 June, <<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p?query=Id:chamber/hansardr/2006-06-19/0000>>.
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs 2003, *Every Picture Tells a Story: Report on the Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2014, 28 August, *Inquiry into the Child Support Program: Hansard*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, viewed 24 November 2016, <<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p?query=Id%3A%22committees%2Fcommrep%2F72aa674-696d-4d8c-9364-7fb8d4c7792a%2F0000%22>>.

- 2015, *From Conflict to Cooperation. Inquiry into the Child Support Program* Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Hughes, J 2000, 'Repartnering after divorce. Marginal mates and unwedded women', *Family Matters*, no. 55, pp. 16–21.
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2003, *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation. Submission No. 1052*, August 2003.
- Hunter, R 2005, 'Decades of panic', *Griffith Review*, no. 10, pp. 53–63.
- Ingleby, R 1994, 'The economic consequences of divorce in Australia: Recent developments', *Houston Law Journal*, vol. 31, pp. 617–29.
- Isenhardt, M-A 1979, 'Divorced women: A comparison of two groups who have retained or relinquished custody of their children', PhD thesis, California School of Professional Psychology.
- Jackson, R 1994, *Mothers Who Leave. Behind the myth of women without their children*, Pandora, London.
- Jensen, AM 2005, 'Barn som bor med far bor også med [Children living with father also lives with mother]', *Samfunnsspeilet*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 30–8.
- Jensen, AM & Clausen, S-E 1997, *Samvær Og Fravær. Foreldres kontakt med barn de ikke bor sammen med [Visitation and Absence: Parental contact with children they do not live with]* NIBR, Oslo.
- Johnston, D & Swanson, D 2007, 'Cognitive acrobatics in the construction of worker–mother identity', *Sex Roles*, vol. 57, pp. 447–59.
- Juby, H, Le Bourdais, C & Marcil-Gratton, N 2005, 'Sharing roles, sharing custody? Couples' characteristics and children's living arrangements at separation', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 67, no. 1, pp. 157–72.
- Kanazawa, S & Still, M 2000, 'Parental investment as a game of chicken', *Politics and the Life Sciences*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 17–26.
- Kartch, FF 2013, 'Nonresidential parenting: Parental roles and parent/child relationships', PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin–Madison.
- Karvelas, P 2006, 'Weathier dads to get a better deal', *The Australian*, 1 March, p. 5.
- 2010a, 'Labor to hit deadbeat dads for child support', *The Australian*, 12 August.
- 2010b, 'Non-paying mums spied on', *The Australian*, 7 May.
- 2011, 'Use of spies doubles in bid for child payments', *Weekend Australian*, 8–9 January, p. 7.
- Kaspiew, R 2010, 'AIFS evaluation of the 2006 family law reforms: Key findings', paper presented to 11th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, 7–9 July 2010.
- Kaspiew, R, Carson, R, Dunstan, J, De Maio, J, Moore, S, Moloney, L, Smart, D, Qu, L, Coulson, M & Tayton, S 2015, *Experiences of Separated Parents Study (Evaluation of the 2012 Family Violence Amendments)*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Kaspiew, R, Carson, R, Qu, L, Horsfall, B, Tayton, S, Moore, S, Coulson, M & Dunstan, J 2015, *Court Outcomes Project (Evaluation of the 2012 Family Violence Amendments)*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Kaspiew, R, Gray, M, Weston, R, Moloney, L, Hand, K, Qu, L & Family Law Evaluation Team 2009, *Evaluation of the 2006 Family Law Reforms*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Kay, HH 2002, 'No-fault divorce and child custody: Chilling out the gender wars', *Family Law Quarterly*, vol. 36, pp. 27–47.
- Kaye, M & Tolmie, J 1998, 'Discoursing dads: The rhetorical devices of fathers' rights groups', *Melbourne University Law Review*, vol. 22, pp. 162–94.
- Keller, F 1975, 'The childless mother. An evaluation of deviancy as a concept of contemporary culture', PhD thesis, California School of Professional Psychology.

- Kielty, S 2005, 'Mothers are non-resident parents too: A consideration of mothers' perspectives on non-residential parenthood', *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 1–16.
- 2006a, 'Mothers are non-resident parents too: A consideration of mother's perspectives on non-residential parenthood', paper presented to International Conference on Children and Divorce, Norwich, 24–27 July 2006
- 2006b, 'Similarities and differences in the experiences of non-resident mothers and non-resident fathers', *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, vol. 20, pp. 74–94.
- 2008a, 'Non-resident motherhood: Managing a threatened identity', *Child & Family Social Work*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 32–40.
- 2008b, 'Working hard to resist a "Bad Mother" label: Narratives of non-resident motherhood', *Qualitative Social Work*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 363–79.
- Kitterod, RH 2004, 'Samvær med barn etter samlivsbrudd. Hva svarer far og hva svarer mor? [Contact with children after break-up. What do father answer and what do mother answer?]', *Samfunnsspeilet*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 55–64.
- 2006, 'Samværmødre—liten gruppe med mye omsorg [Non-resident mothers—small group with a lot of care]', *Samfunnsspeilet*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 19–28.
- Kitterod, RH & Lyngstad, J 2011, *Untraditional caring arrangements among parents living apart. The case of Norway*, Discussion Papers No. 660, Statistics Norway, Oslo.
- Kliger, B 1988, 'The Child Support Scheme. Who is reaping the benefits?', *Legal Service Bulletin*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 16–8.
- Koehler, J 1982, 'Mothers without custody', *Children Today*, vol. 11, pp. 12–35.
- Krecker, M, Brown, P, Melli, M & Wimer, L 2003, *Children's Living Arrangements in Divorced Wisconsin Families with Shared Placement*, Report No. 83, Institute for Research on Poverty University of Wisconsin–Madison.
- Kruk, E 2010, 'Collateral damage: The lived experiences of divorced mothers without custody', *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, vol. 51, no. 8, pp. 526–43.
- 2015, 'The lived experiences of non-custodial parents in Canada: A comparison of mothers and fathers', *International Journal for Family Research and Policy*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 80–95.
- Lacroix, C 2006, 'Freedom, desire and power: Gender processes and presumptions of shared care and responsibility after parental separation', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 184–96.
- Laing, L 2010, *No Way to Live. Women's experiences of negotiating the family law system in the context of domestic violence*, University of Sydney.
- Lambert, S 1992, *An Examination of the Relationship Between Sole Parents and Sole Parent Income Support*, Economic Programme Working Papers No. 79, Murdoch University, Perth.
- Larsen, L 1987, 'Factors which facilitate and hinder psycho-social adjustment for mothers who are living apart from their children', Master of Arts thesis, University of British Columbia.
- Lau, YK 2004, 'Nonresident parents' participation in nonresidential parenting in a Chinese context', *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 149–59.
- 2005, 'An exploration of nonresident parents' financial provision and children's self-esteem in a Chinese context', *Journal of Family Social Work*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 47–65.
- 2007, 'Facilitating factors for nonresident parents' financial provisions for children in Hong Kong', *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 44–55.
- Lim, H-J & Skinner, T 2012, 'Culture and motherhood: Findings from a qualitative study of East Asian mothers in Britain', *Families, Relationships and Society*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 327–43.
- Lin, I-F 2000, 'Perceived fairness and compliance with child support obligations', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 62, no. 2, pp. 388–98.

- Lodge, J & Alexander, M 2011, *Views of Adolescents in Separated Families. A study of adolescents' experiences after the 2006 reforms to the family law system*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Lorber, J 1994, "Night to his day": The social construction of gender', in J Lorber (ed.), *Paradoxes of Gender*, Yale University Press, New Haven, pp. 13–36.
- 2000, 'Using gender to undo gender', *Feminist Theory*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 79–95.
- Losoncz, I 2007, 'Factors influencing compliance with child support obligations', paper presented to Inaugural Growing Up in Australia Conference Melbourne, 3–4 December 2007.
- 2008, 'Shared parental responsibility. Stability of arrangements among separated Australian families of young children across two years', *Family Matters*, no. 79, pp. 26–33.
- Lundberg, S, Pollak, RA & Wales, T 1997, 'Do husbands and wives pool their resources? Evidence from the United Kingdom', *The Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 463–80.
- Lyngstad, J 2010, 'Why do so few non-resident mothers pay child support?', paper presented to 8th European Network for the Sociological and Demographic Studies of Divorce meeting, Valencia, 14–16th October 2010
- Lyngstad, J & Kitterod, RH 2008, *Samvær Og Bidrag 2002–2004 [Contact and Contributions 2002–2004. Final Report]* Rapportør 2008/45 Statistics Norway, Oslo.
- Maccoby, EE, Mnookin, RH, Depner, CE & Peters, HE 1992, *Dividing the Child. Social and legal dilemmas of custody*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Maclean, M & Eekelaar, J 1993, 'Child support: The British solution', *International Journal of Law and the Family*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 205–29.
- The Macquarie Dictionary Online*, 2013, Macmillan Publishers Australia, <<https://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/>>.
- Madhavan, S, Richter, L & Gross, M 2015, '"Doing" and "undoing" gender in fathering research: Evidence from the Birth to Twenty cohort study in South Africa', *Fathering*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 146–63.
- Maguire, B 2011, 'How family composition changes across waves', in B Maguire (ed.), *The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual Statistical report 2010*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 19–27.
- Main, G 2009, 15 June, 'Serial mothers, Today Tonight [television broadcast transcript]'.
- Mance, P & Yu, P 2010, 'Context, relationship transitions and conflict: Explaining outcomes for Australian youth from non-intact families', *Journal of Population Research*, vol. 27, pp. 75–105.
- Mandell, D 1995a, 'Fathers who don't pay child support', *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 85–116.
- 1995b, 'Nonsupporting divorced fathers. The problem in context', *Canadian Social Work Review*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 190–210.
- Manning, WD & Smock, PJ 2000, '"Swapping" families: Serial parenting and economic support for children', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 62, pp. 111–22.
- Markham, M & Coleman, M 2012, 'The good, the bad, and the ugly: Divorced mothers' experiences with coparenting', *Family Relations*, vol. 61, pp. 586–600.
- Mayer, M 1997, 'Noncustodial mothers: Trends in emerging family form', Doctor of Education thesis, University of Cincinnati.
- McCarthy, JR, Edwards, R & Gillies, V 2003, *Making Families. Moral tales of parenting and step-parenting*, Sociologypress, Durham.
- McClelland, A & Trethewey, J 1987, *Child Support: Directions and conditions for change. A submission to the report Child Support: A discussion paper on child maintenance*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne.

- McDonald, P 2008, 'Family payments', paper presented to 2008 Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute Public Lectures Series: Case studies in social policy, Canberra, 21 July 2008.
- (ed.) 1986, *Settling Up: Property and income distribution on divorce in Australia*, Prentice-Hall, Sydney.
- McHale, J, Waller, MR & Pearson, J 2012, 'Coparenting interventions for fragile families: What do we know and where do we need to go next?', *Family Process*, vol. 51, no. 3, pp. 284–306.
- McKay, S & Atkinson, A 2005, *Characteristics of maintenance non-compliance: Re-analysis of the DfES Child Contact Survey [Unpublished paper]*, University of Bristol.
- McMurray, A 1992, 'Influences on parent–child relationships in non-custodial mothers', *Australian Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 138–47.
- Medved, CE 2009, 'Constructing breadwinning–mother identities: Moral, personal, and political positioning', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 3–4, pp. 140–56.
- Metso, M & Le Feuvre, N 2007, *Quantitative Methods for Analysing Gender, Ethnicity and Migration*, University of York and University de Toulouse-Mirail.
- Meyer, DR & Bartfeld, J 1994, *Compliance with Child Support Orders in Divorce Cases*, Discussion Paper No. 1043–94, Institute for Research on Poverty University of Wisconsin–Madison
- 1998, 'Patterns of child support compliance in Wisconsin', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 60, pp. 309–18.
- Meyer, DR & Garasky, S 1993, 'Custodial fathers: Myths, realities and child support policy', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 55, pp. 73–89.
- Meyers, S & Lakin, J 1983, *Who Will Take the Children? A new custody option for divorcing mothers—and fathers*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, New York.
- Mikelson, KS 2008, 'He said, she said: Comparing mother and father reports of father involvement', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 70, no. 3, pp. 613–24.
- Miller, GW 2005, 'Leaving to grow/Inspiration to grow/Leaving inspiration', in D Gustafson (ed.), *Unbecoming Mothers: The social production of maternal absence*, Haworth Clinical Press, New York, pp. 211–26.
- Millman, M 1991, *Warm Hearts and Cold Cash. The intimate dynamics of families and money*, The Free Press, New York.
- Millward, C, Campo, M & Fehlberg, B 2011, 'Mothers who are liable to pay child support', *Family Matters*, no. 86, pp. 62–71.
- Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support 2005, *In the Best Interests of Children. Report of the Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support* AGPS, Canberra.
- Moloney, L 2001a, 'Do fathers "win" or do mothers "lose"? A preliminary analysis of closely contested parenting judgments in the Family Court of Australia', *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 363–96.
- 2001b, 'Researching the Family Law Reform Act. A case of selective attention?', *Family Matters*, no. 59, pp. 64–73.
- Moore, J & Riley, L 2010, 'Aboriginal mother yarns', in S Goodwin & K Huppertz (eds), *Contemporary Motherhoods in Australia*, Sydney University Press Sydney, pp. 175–93.
- Morris, S 2007, *Child Support Awards in Britain: An analysis of data from the Families and Children Study*, CASE 119, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London.
- Murray Woods and Associates 1997, *Report on Quantitative Survey Child Support Compliance Research Report for Child Support Agency*, [unpublished report], Canberra.
- Myers, D 2004, *Child Support Arrangements: A legal, policy, procedural, demographic and caseload analysis. Final report*, Division of Child Support Enforcement Virginia Department of Social Services Richmond.
- Myers, M & Wilson, M 2014, 'Leprosy and the plague: State surveillance of low-income fathers', *Surveillance and Society*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 124–39.

- Natalier, K 2012, 'Descriptions of loss and resilience among fathers paying child support', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2-3, pp. 246–55.
- Natalier, K & Hewitt, B 2010, '"It's not just about money": Non-resident fathers' perspectives on paying child support', *Sociology*, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 489–505.
- 2014, 'Separated parents reproducing and undoing gender through defining legitimate uses of child support', *Gender & Society*, vol. 28, no. 6, pp. 904–25.
- Natalier, K, Walter, M, Wulff, M, Reynolds, M & Hewitt, B 2008, *Child Support and Housing Outcomes*, Report No. 113, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Southern Research Centre, Melbourne.
- Nyman, C 1999, 'Gender equality in "the most equal country in the world"? Money and marriage in Sweden', *The Sociological Review*, vol. 47, no. 4, pp. 766–93.
- Nyman, C & Reinikainen, L 2007, 'Elusive independence in a context of gender equality in Sweden', in J Stocks, C Diaz & B Hallerod (eds), *Modern Couples, Sharing Money, Sharing Life*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, pp. 41–71.
- O'Hanlon, ML & Stevenson, C 2005, 'Innovation at the Australian Child Support Agency', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 197–204.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011, *Doing Better for Families*, OECD, Paris.
- Packham, B 2008, 'Deadbeat mums under scrutiny', *Herald Sun*, 10 December p. 15.
- Pagano, AM 2000, *Journeys of Women Without Custody. From ambivalence to renewed sense of self* 2nd edn, AuthorHouse, Bloomington, Indiana.
- Pahl, J 1995, 'His money, her money: Recent research on financial organisation in marriage', *Journal of Economic Psychology*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 361–76.
- 2000, 'The gender of spending within households', *Radical Statistics*, vol. 75, pp. 38–48.
- Palkovitz, R, Trask, BS & Adamsons, K 2014, 'Essential differences in the meaning and processes of mothering and fathering: Family systems, feminist and qualitative perspectives', *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, vol. 6, pp. 406–20.
- Parkinson, P 2001, 'A plea for greater rigor in socio-legal research', *Family Matters*, no. 59, pp. 77–8.
- Parkinson, P, Cashmore, J & Single, J 2005, 'Adolescents' views on the fairness of parenting and financial arrangements after separation', *Family Court Review*, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 429–44.
- 2010, 'The need for reality testing in relocation cases', *Family Law Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 1–34.
- Parkinson, P & Smyth, B 2003, 'When the difference is night and day: Some empirical insights into patterns of parent–child contact after separation', paper presented to 8th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, 12–14 February 2003.
- Paskowicz, P 1982, *Absentee Mothers*, Universe Books, New York.
- Pasley, K, Petren, RE & Fish, JN 2014, 'Use of identity theory to inform fathering scholarship', *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 298–318.
- Peacey, V & Haux, T 2007, *Children's Contact after Separation: Factors associated with contact, changes in contact and the parents who become non-resident*, One Parent Families, Gingerbread, London.
- Pearson, J & Anhalt, J 1994, 'Examining the connection between child access and child support', *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 93–109.
- Peatling, S 2006, 'Child support gets leaner and meaner', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 March, p. 1.
- Perkins, M 2016, 'Abolish the Family Court? Please explain', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 July.
- Philip, G 2014, 'Fathering after separation or divorce: navigating domestic, public and moral spaces', *Families, Relationships and Society*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 219–33.
- Pieterse, JT 2007, 'Parenting from a distance: Illuminating the lived experiences of non-resident divorced mothers', PhD thesis, University of Witwatersrand.

- Pike, L 2000, 'Single mum or single dad? The effects of parent residency arrangements on the development of primary school-aged children', paper presented to 7th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference Melbourne.
- Polson, D 1977, 'Runaway wives: A comparison of marital status, feminism, and self-actualization', Masters thesis, United States International University.
- Pryor, J & Rodgers, B 2001, *Children in Changing Families. Life after parental separation*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Qu, L 2004, 'Children's living arrangements after separation', *Family Matters*, no. 67, pp. 4–7.
- Qu, L & Weston, R 2007, 'Snapshots of Family Relationships Prior to the Family Law Reforms: Baseline report. Draft report presented to the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs'.
- 2008, *Snapshots of Family Relationships*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- 2010, *Parenting Dynamics After Separation. A follow-up study of parents who separated after the 2006 family law reforms*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- 2013, 'Financial support for children after parental separation', in *The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual statistical report 2012*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, pp. 13–27.
- Qu, L, Weston, R, Moloney, L, Kaspiew, R & Dunstan, J 2014, *Post-Separation Parenting, Property and Relationship Dynamics After Five Years* Attorney-General's Department, Canberra.
- Radford, L & Hester, M 2006, *Mothering Through Domestic Violence*, Jessica Kingsley, London.
- Raymond, J 1987, *Bringing Up Children Alone: Policies for sole parents*, Department of Social Security, Canberra.
- Renda, J 2012, 'Is it just a matter of time? How relationships between children and their separated parents differ by care-time arrangements', in Australian Institute of Family Studies (ed.), *The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual statistical report 2012*, AIFS, Melbourne, pp. 29–42.
- Rhoades, H 2010, 'Children's needs and "gender wars": The paradox of parenting law reform', *Australian Journal of Family Law*, vol. 24, pp. 160–75.
- Rhoades, H, Graycar, R & Harrison, M 2000, *The Family Law Reform Act 1995: The first three years*, University of Sydney and Family Court of Australia, Sydney.
- 2001, 'Researching family law reform. The authors respond', *Family Matters*, no. 59, pp. 68–75.
- Richardson, M & Sawyer, AJ 2001, 'A taxonomy of the tax compliance literature: Further findings, problems and prospects', *Australian Tax Forum*, vol. 16, pp. 137–320.
- Ridge, T 2005, 'Supporting children? The impact of child support policies on children's wellbeing in the UK and Australia', *Journal of Social Policy*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 121–42.
- Risman, BJ 1993, 'Methodological implications of feminist scholarship', *The American Sociologist*, vol. 24, no. 3–4, pp. 15–25.
- 2004, 'Gender as a social structure: Theory wrestling with activism', *Gender & Society*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 429–50.
- Rogers, M, Pattenden, R, Pullen, J & Bickerdike, A 2010, *Women and Separation. Managing new horizons*, 3rd edn, Relationships Australia (Victoria), beyondblue, Melbourne.
- Rosenblum, KE 1984, 'The route to voluntary non-custody: How mothers decide to relinquish child custody', *Alternative Lifestyles*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 175–85.
- 1986, 'Leaving as a wife, leaving as a mother: Ways of relinquishing custody', *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 197–213.
- Ryan, C 1991, 'The prediction of fathers' child support compliance from the quality of the former spouse relationship and psychological presence', PhD thesis, The University of Tennessee.
- Salt, B 2013a, 'Real house husbands more likely to live on struggle street', *The Australian*, 4 July, p. 25.

- 2013b, 'Single dads growing at twice the rate of lone-mum families', *The Australian*, 9 May, p. 25.
- Santora, J & Hays, PA 1998, 'Coping outside traditional roles', *Women & Therapy*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 53–66.
- Seltzer, JA & Brandreth, Y 1994, 'What fathers says about involvement with children after separation', *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 49–77.
- Seltzer, JA & Maralani, V 2001, *Joint Legal Custody and Child Support Payments: Are there lasting custody effects?*, On-Line Working Paper No. 004–01, California Center for Population Research, Los Angeles.
- Seltzer, JA & Schaeffer, NC 2001, 'Nonresident fathers' involvement with children: A look at families on W-2', in M Cancian & DR Meyer (eds), *Final Report: W-2 child support demonstration evaluation*, University of Wisconsin–Madison.
- Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs 2006, *Child Support Legislation Amendment (Reform of the Child Support Scheme New Formula and Other Measures) Bill 2006 [Provisions]*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Sheehan, G & Smyth, B 2000, 'Spousal violence and post-separation financial outcomes', *Australian Journal of Family Law*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 1–17.
- Silvey, J & Birrell, B 2004, 'Financial outcomes for parents after separation', *People and Place*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 45–56.
- Simpson, B 1997, 'On gifts, payments and disputes: Divorce and changing family structures in contemporary Britain', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 731–45.
- Sinha, M 2014, *Parenting and Child Support After Separation or Divorce. Spotlight on Canadians: General Social Survey*, Statistics Canada.
- Skinner, C 2002, 'Fathers, child maintenance and contact', *Nemesis*, no. 1, pp. 5–12.
- 2013, 'Child maintenance reforms: Understanding fathers' expressive agency and the power of reciprocity', *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 242–65.
- Skinner, C, Bradshaw, J & Davidson, J 2007, *Child Support Policy: An international perspective*, Research Report No 405, HMSO, Norwich.
- Skinner, C & Davidson, J 2009, 'Recent trends in child maintenance schemes in 14 countries', *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 25–52.
- Smock, PJ & Manning, WD 1997, 'Nonresident parents' characteristics and child support', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 59, no. 4, pp. 798–808.
- Smyth, B 2002, 'Research into parent–child contact after parental separation', *Family Matters*, no. 62, pp. 33–7.
- 2004, 'Post separation fathering: What does Australian research tell us?', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 20–49.
- 2005a, 'Post-separation patterns of parenting in Australia. Who opts for which pattern and why?', PhD thesis, Swinburne University of Technology.
- 2005b, 'Time to rethink time? The experience of time with children after divorce', *Family Matters*, no. 71, pp. 4–10.
- 2009, 'A 5–year retrospective of post-separation shared care research in Australia', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 36–59.
- Smyth, B, Baxter, J, Fletcher, R & Moloney, L 2013, 'Fathers in Australia. A contemporary snapshot', in DW Shwalb, B Shwalb & ME Lamb (eds), *Fathers in Cultural Context* Routledge, New York, pp. 361–82.
- Smyth, B, Chisholm, R, Rodgers, B & Son, V 2014, 'Legislating for shared-time parenting after parental separation: Insights from Australia', *Law and Contemporary Problems*, vol. 77, pp. 109–49.
- Smyth, B & Ferro, A 2002, 'When the difference is night and day. Parent–child contact after separation', *Family Matters*, no. 63, pp. 54–9.

- Smyth, B & Henman, P 2010, 'The distributional and financial impacts of the new Australian Child Support Scheme: A "before and day-after reform" comparison of assessed liability', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 5–32.
- Smyth, B & Moloney, L 2008, 'Changes in patterns of post-separation parenting over time: A brief review', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 14, pp. 7–22.
- Smyth, B, Qu, L & Weston, R 2004, 'The demography of parent–child contact', in B Smyth (ed.), *Parent–Child Contact and Post-Separation Parenting Arrangements*, AIFS, Melbourne, pp. 111–22.
- Smyth, B & Rodgers, B 2011, 'Strategic bargaining over child support and parenting time: A critical review of the literature', *Australian Journal of Family Law*, vol. 25, pp. 210–35.
- Smyth, B, Rodgers, B, Son, V, Allen, L & Vnuk, M 2012, 'Separated parents' knowledge of how changes in parenting-time can affect child support payments and Family Tax Benefit splitting in Australia: A pre-/post-reform comparison', *Australian Journal of Family Law*, vol. 26, pp. 1–33.
- Smyth, B, Rodgers, B, Son, V, Vnuk, M, Esler, M & Shephard, A 2011, 'Child support compliance and perceptions of fairness: A pre- and post-reform comparison', paper presented to Australian Social Policy Conference, Sydney, 6–8 July 2011.
- Smyth, B, Rodgers, B, Temple, J, Son, V, Esler, M & Shephard, A 2010, 'An ex-couples approach to understanding bargaining over child support and parenting time', paper presented to 11th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference Melbourne, 7–9 July 2010.
- Smyth, B, Sheehan, G & Fehlberg, B 2001a, 'Patterns of parenting after divorce: A pre-Reform Act benchmark study', *Australian Journal of Family Law*, vol. 15, pp. 1–15.
- 2001b, 'Post-divorce parenting patterns. A summary of findings from the Institute's Australian Divorce Transitions Project', *Family Matters*, no. 59, pp. 61–3.
- Smyth, B, Vnuk, M, Rodgers, B & Son, V 2014, 'Can child support compliance be improved by the introduction of a "fairer" child support formula and more rigorous enforcement? The recent Australian experience', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 204–20.
- Smyth, B & Weston, R 2000, *Financial Living Standards After Divorce* Australian Institute of Family Studies Report No. 23, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- 2004, 'The attitudes of separated mothers and fathers to 50/50 shared care', *Family Matters*, no. 67, pp. 8–15.
- 2005, *A Snapshot of Contemporary Attitudes to Child Support*, Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne.
- Smyth, B, Weston, R, Moloney, L, Richardson, N & Temple, J 2008, 'Changes in patterns of post-separation parenting over time: Recent Australian data', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 14, pp. 23–36.
- Smyth, B & Wolcott, I 2004, 'Food and family transitions: Cooking in the aftermath of divorce', *Journal of the Home Economics Institute of Australia*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 2–8.
- Snowdon, J & Kotzé, E 2012, 'I'm not a bad mother—Stories of mothering-on-the-edge', *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 142–56.
- Sodermans, AK, Matthijs, K & Swicegood, G 2013, 'Characteristics of joint physical custody families in Flanders', *Demographic Research*, vol. 28, pp. 821–48.
- Son, V, Rodgers, B & Smyth, B 2014, 'The impact of child support changes on the financial living standards of separated families in Australia', *Australian Journal of Family Law*, vol. 48, pp. 193–226.
- Sonenstein, FL & Calhoun, CA 1990, 'Determinants of child support: A pilot survey of absent parents', *Contemporary Policy Issues*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 75–94.
- Sousa, L & Sorensen, E 2006, *The Economic Reality of Nonresident Mothers and Their Children* The Urban Institute, Washington.

- Sprague, J & Zimmerman, MK 1993, 'Overcoming dualisms: A feminist agenda for sociological methodology', in P England (ed.), *Theory on Gender/ Feminism on Theory*, Aldine De Gruyter, New York, pp. 255–80.
- Stahly, GB 2000, 'Women with children in violent relationships—The choice of leaving may bring the consequence of custodial challenge', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 239–51.
- Statacorp 2009, *Stata Statistical Software Release 11* College Station, Texas.
- 2015, *Stata Survey Data Reference Manual. Release 14*, Stata Press, Texas.
- Stauffer, KE & O'Brien, DZ 2017, *Quantitative methods and feminist political science*, Oxford University Press,
<http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-210?rskey=VslGmf&result=1>.
- Stets, J & Burke, PJ 2000, 'Identity theory and social identity theory', *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 63, pp. 224–37.
- Stewart, SD 1999a, 'Disneyland dads, Disneyland moms? How nonresident parents spend time with absent children', *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 539–56.
- 1999b, 'Nonresident mothers' and fathers' social contact with children', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 61, pp. 894–907.
- 2004, 'Children with non-resident parents: Living arrangements, visitation and child support', paper presented to American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 14–17 August 2004.
- 2010, 'Children with nonresident parents: Living arrangements, visitation, and child support', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 72, no. 5, pp. 1078–91.
- Stirling, K & Aldrich, T 2012, 'Economic inequities in child support: The role of gender', *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, vol. 53, no. 5, pp. 329–47.
- Stjernstrom, O & Stromgren, M 2012, 'Geographical distance between children and absent parents in separated families', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, vol. 94, no. 3, pp. 239–53.
- Stocks, J 2007, 'Introduction: The role of money in "doing couple"', in J Stocks, C Diaz & B Hallerod (eds), *Modern Couples, Sharing Money, Sharing Life*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York pp. 1–6.
- Summerfield, T, Young, L, Harman, J & Flatau, P 2010, 'Child support and welfare to work reforms. The economic consequences for single-parent families', *Family Matters*, no. 84, pp. 68–78.
- Tabachnick, BG & Fidell, LS 2001, *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 4th edn, Allyn & Bacon, Boston.
- Tannous, K & Smith, M 2013, 'Access to full-time employment: Does gender matter?', *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 237–57.
- Teachman, JD 1991, 'Contributions to children by divorced fathers', *Social Problems*, vol. 38, pp. 358–71.
- Teachman, JD & Polonko, K 1990, 'Negotiating divorce outcomes: Can we identify patterns in divorce settlements?', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 52, pp. 129–39.
- Thacker, J 2005, 'Women of courage. The non-custodial mother', in M Porter, P Short & A O'Reilly (eds), *Motherhood: Power and oppression*, Women's Press, Toronto, pp. 237–50.
- Thompson, L 1992, 'Feminist methodology for family studies', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 3–18.
- Thompson, R & Laible, D 1999, 'Noncustodial parents', in ME Lamb (ed.), *Parenting and Child Development in Nontraditional Families*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, pp. 103–23.
- Thuen, F 2006, 'The situation of non-resident fathers in Norway', paper presented to 6th Workshop of the WELLCHI Network: The relationship between children and non-resident fathers and its impact on their quality of life, Oslo, 1–3 December 2006

- Todres, R 1978, 'Runaway wives: An increasing North-American phenomenon', *The Family Coordinator*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 17–21.
- Tolmie, J, Elizabeth, V & Gavey, N 2010a, 'Imposing gender neutral standards on a gendered world: Parenting arrangements in family law post-separation', *Canterbury Law Review*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 302–30.
- 2010b, 'Is 50:50 shared care a desirable norm following family separation? Raising questions about current family law practices in New Zealand', *New Zealand Universities Law Review*, vol. 24, pp. 136–66.
- Trepte, S 2006, 'Social identity theory', in J Bryant & P Vorderer (eds), *Psychology of Entertainment*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ, pp. 255–71.
- Trinder, L 2010, 'Shared residence: A review of recent research evidence', *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 475–98.
- Turner, S, Monk, P & Mudaly, B 1998, 'Working with male sole parents', paper presented to Changing Families, Challenging Futures. 6th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference Melbourne, 25–27 November 1998.
- UCLA Statistical Consulting Group n.d., 'How can I do a t-test with survey data? Stata FAQ', viewed 20 June 2017, <<https://stats.idre.ucla.edu/stata/faq/how-can-i-do-a-t-test-with-survey-data/>>.
- Vanassche, S, Sodermans, AK, Matthijs, K & Swicegood, G 2013, 'Commuting between two parental households: The association between joint physical custody and adolescent wellbeing following divorce', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 139–58.
- Viellaris, R 2011, 'Queensland deadbeat dads' tax returns targeted to recover outstanding child support payments', *Courier Mail*, 29 August.
- Vnuk, M 2000, 'Child support minimum liability: Contribution or penalty?', Masters thesis, Flinders University.
- 2009, 'Private collection of child support', paper presented to Australian Social Policy Research Conference, Sydney, 8–10 July 2009.
- 2010, 'Merged or omitted? What we know (or don't) about separated mothers who pay or should pay child support', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 62–76.
- 2011, *Submission in response to the Australian Law Reform Commission Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws. Child Support and Family Assistance Issues Paper 38* Submission No. CFV 47, Australian Law Reform Commission, Sydney.
- Vnuk, M, Smyth, B & Archer, T 2015, 'Comment: The Report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Child Support Program', *Family Law Review*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 155–67.
- Walker, AJ & McGraw, LA 2000, 'Who is responsible for responsible fathering?', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 62, no. 2, pp. 563–9.
- Waller, MR & Emory, AD 2014, 'Parenting apart: Differences between unmarried and divorcing parents in separated families', *Family Court Review*, vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 686–703.
- Walter, M 2002, 'Private collection of child support: Back to the future', *Just Policy*, no. 26, pp. 18–27.
- Walter, M & Hewitt, B 2012, 'Post-separation parenting and Indigenous families', *Family Matters*, no. 91, pp. 83–91.
- Walzer, S 2008, 'Redoing gender through divorce', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 5–21.
- Wardill, S 2006, 'Parents facing welfare probe', *The Courier Mail* 1 March, p. 1.
- Watson, LB 2013, 'Power and control in the legal system: From marriage/relationship to divorce and custody', *Violence Against Women*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 166–86.
- Weiss, Y & Willis, RJ 1985, 'Children as collective goods and divorce settlements', *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 268–92.
- 1989, *An Economic Analysis of Divorce Settlements*, Population Research Center No. 89–5, University of Chicago.

- West, B & Kissman, K 1992, 'Mothers without custody—Treatment issues', *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 229–38.
- West, C & Zimmerman, D 1987, 'Doing gender', *Gender and Society*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 125–51.
- Weston, R 2008, 'Families through life: Complications, risks and opportunities', paper presented to 10th Australian Institute of Families Studies Conference, Melbourne, 9–11 July 2008.
- 2010, 'Child support liability, compliance and fairness: Reports of parents who separated after the 2006 family law reforms were introduced', paper presented to 11th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference Melbourne, 7–9 July 2010.
- Weston, R, Qu, L, Gray, M, Kaspiew, R, Moloney, L, Hand, K & Family Law Evaluation Team 2011, 'Care-time arrangements after the 2006 reforms. Implications for children and their parents', *Family Matters*, no. 86, pp. 19–32.
- White, JM & Klein, DM 2008, *Family Theories*, 3rd edn, SAGE publications, Thousand Oaks.
- Whiteford, P & Adema, W 2006, 'Combating child poverty in OECD countries: Is work the answer?', *European Journal of Social Security*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 235–56.
- Whiteley, KM 2014, 'Feminist theories of criminal behavior', in JS Albanese (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, John Wiley and Sons Inc., pp. 1–5.
- Wikeley, N, Barnett, S, Brown, J, Davis, G, Diamond, I, Draper, T & Smith, P 2001, *National Survey of Child Support Agency Clients*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No. 152, Department for Work and Pensions, Norwich.
- Wikeley, N, Ireland, E, Bryson, C & Smith, R 2008, *Relationship Separation and Child Support Study*, Research Report No. 503, HMSO, Norwich.
- Williams, JC 2010, *Reshaping the Work–Family Debate: Why men and class matter*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Willis, RJ 2000, 'The economics of fatherhood', *The American Economic Review*, vol. 90, no. 2, pp. 378–82.
- Wilson, F & Stocks, J 2007, 'The meaning of breadwinning in dual-earner couples', in J Stocks, C Diaz & B Hallerod (eds), *Modern Couples, Sharing Money, Sharing Life*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, pp. 72–99.
- Wilson, G 2006, 'The non-resident parental role for separated fathers: A review', *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, vol. 20, pp. 286–317.
- Wilson, J 1990, *Single Fathers. Australian men take on a new role*, Sun Books, Crows Nest.
- Wolffs, T & Shallcross, L 2000, 'Low income parents paying child support. Evaluation of the introduction of a \$260 minimum child support assessment', *Family Matters*, no. 57, pp. 26–33.
- Wood, JT 1995, 'Feminist scholarship and the study of relationships', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 103–20.
- Woolley, F 2004, 'Why pay child benefits to mothers?', *Canadian Public Policy*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 47–69.
- Worner, SM 2006, *The Effects of Assortative Mating on Income Inequality: A decompositional analysis*, Discussion Paper no. 538, The Australian National University Centre for Economic Research, Canberra.
- Wyss, B 1999, 'Culture and gender in household economics: The case of Jamaican child support payments', *Feminist Economics*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 1–24.
- 2001, 'Gender and cash child support in Jamaica', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 415–39.
- Yaron, L 2015, 'Mothers can also pay child support, Israel's Chief Rabbinate rules', *Haaretz*, 3 December
- Zelizer, VA 1989, 'The social meaning of money: "Special monies"', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 95, no. 2, pp. 342–77.
- 1994, *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin money, paychecks, poor relief, and other currencies*, Princeton University.

- 1998, 'How people talk about money', *The American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 41, no. 10, pp. 1373–83.
- 2006, 'Money, power and sex', *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, vol. 18, pp. 303–16.
- Zubrick, SR, Smith, GJ, Nicholson, J, Sanson, AV, Jackiewicz, TA & The LSAC Research Consortium 2008, *Parenting and Families in Australia* Social Policy Research Paper No. 34 Canberra.
- Zuravin, S & Greif, G 1989, 'Low-income mothers without custody: Who are they and where are their children?', *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, vol. 16, pp. 163–79.

Appendix A

Table A1 Australian literature review

Researchers	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Burns (1980)	1975	233 women (13% had a nonresident child) & 102 men	Sydney	Featured articles in Sydney newspapers & radio, & Parents Without Partners	no	S: survey	Marriages that ended in early 1970s
McMurray (1992)	early 1990s	43 NRM	Western Australia	Non-probability, purposive: radio & newspaper ads	yes	Q: one-hour interview	NRM defined as one whose child or children were for any reason not living with her

Researchers	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Funder & Smyth (1996)	1996	494 divorced parents: 40 NRM	Australia	Random from Telstra White Pages	yes	S: telephone survey	Parents who had a dependent child at the time of separation & who had separated after January 1988.
Buskens (2002, 2005)	early 2000s	20 NRM	Victoria	Non-probability, purposive: newspaper ads	no	Q: 2 semi structured interviews	Mothers who voluntarily left their children
Silvey & Birrell (2004)	2001	5,023 payer mothers & 45,750 payer fathers	National	CSA longitudinal dataset	yes	R: admin data	Cohort of cases registered in 1997 & still active in 2001. Includes cases with no current liability.

Researchers	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Baker(2003, 2005)	early to mid-2000s	30 NRM & 191 NRF	National: 75% WA	Non-probability, purposive: community newspapers, posters at shopping centres, McDonalds, email lists, father & mother support groups	no	S: survey: mail-back, email or via website	Only focused on parental involvement with their child's school
Wolffs & Shallcross (2000)	2000	225 LM, 1,275 LF & 766 payees	National	Random sample of CSA clients 8,000 payers & 2,000 payees with minimum liability	yes	S: telephone survey	Minimum liability cases

Researchers	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Natalier, Walter, Wulff, Reynolds & Hewitt (2008)	2004–2005	36 NRM & 353 NRF, 585 RM & 88 RF	National	Secondary data analysis of Housing, Income & Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Wave 4. HILDA probability multi-stage cluster	yes	S: telephone survey, mail back	Excluded 54 parents who had both resident & nonresident children
Kaspiew, Gray, Weston, Moloney, Hand, Qu & Family Law Evaluation Team (2009) & Weston (2010)	2008	10,000 separated parents: 195 LM	Australia	CSA sample of parent whose case was registered in 2007 & separated between July 2006 & December 2007	yes	S: CATI survey	AIFS Family law evaluation: Longitudinal Study of Separated Families (LSSF) W1

Researchers	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Millward, Campo & Fehlberg (2011)	2009	60 separated parents 2011 paper based on 2009 interviews with 4 LM & 7 PF	Victoria	Purposive sample: newspaper & online ads, brochures at FDR services, & mail-out with final orders from the Family Court & Federal Magistrates Court	yes	Q: in-depth interview. longitudinal 2009, 2010, 2011	Over-sampled for equal & unequal shared care. All liable mothers interviewed had shared care.

Researchers	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Qu & Weston (2010)	2009	7,031/10,002 LSSF W1 reinterviewed: 163 LM	Australia	Follow-up interview of LSSF Wave 1 parents. Original sample: CSA sample of parent whose case was registered in 2007 & separated between July 2006 & December 2007	yes	S: CATI survey	AIFS Family law evaluation: LSSF W2

Researchers	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Qu, Weston, Moloney, Kaspiew & Dunstan (2014)	2012	9,028 parents: 5,755 from LSSF Wave 1 & 3,273 'top-up': 211 LM	Australia	Follow-up interview of LSSF Wave 1 parents. Original sample: CSA sample of parent whose case was registered in 2007 & separated between July 2006 & December 2007. 'Top-up': CSP sample of parents who registered between January 2008 & May 2008 & separated between July 2006 & December 2007	Yes	S: CATI survey	AIFS Family law evaluation: LSSF W3

Researchers	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
De Maio, Kaspiew, Smart, Dustan & Moore (2013)	2012	6,119 parents, 251 LM	Australia	CSP sample of recently separated parents who registered their case in 2012	yes	S: CATI survey	Baseline data for evaluation of the 2012 family violence reforms to the Family Law Act: Survey of Recently Separated Parents (SRSP) 2012
Kaspiew, Carson, Dunstan, De Maio, Moore, Moloney, Smart, Qu, Coulson & Tayton (2015)	2014	6,079 parents: 5% of mothers identified as liable	Australia	CSP sample of recently separated parents who registered their case in 2014	yes	S: CATI survey	Evaluation of the 2012 reforms to the Family Law Act: Survey of Recently Separated Parents (SRSP) 2014

Key: NRM=nonresident mother, NRF=nonresident father, RM=resident mother, RF=resident father, LM=liable mother, PF=payee father, CSA=Child Support Agency, CSP=Child Support Program.

S=survey, Q=qualitative study, R=representative administrative data

Table A2 International literature review

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Todres (1978)	Canada	1975	38 NRM	Toronto	Non-probability, purposive: radio & newspaper ads	no	Q: semi-structured interviews	Married women who left their husband & children with at least one child under 18 years
Paskowicz (1982)	USA	1979	100 NRM	27 US states, 3 Canada, 1 UK	Non- probability: MS magazine ads & snowballing	no	M: mixed methods -mail back survey & interviews	Personal experience
Keller (1975)	USA	1970s	15 NRM	California	not known	no	M: interviews & psychological tests	Mothers who chose to leave their children
Polson (1977)	USA	1970s	30 NRM, 30 RM & 30 married mothers	California	not known	no	M: survey & interviews (15 NRM)	Compared NRM, RM and married mothers with adolescent children
Berke (1979)	USA	1970s	99 NRM	California	Word of mouth & newspaper ads	no	S: survey	Mothers who chose to leave their children
Isenhardt (1979)	USA	1970s	18 NRM & 17 RM	California	not known	no	M: survey and 10 question interview	Compared NRM & RM

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Fischer & Cardea (1982)	USA	1980	17 NRM 16 RM	27 Texas & 5 out of state	Convenience sample, Texas media, - article in Divorce Newsletter, personal contacts via friends, students &, colleagues, snowballing	no	M: semi-structured interviews & fixed format questionnaires	NRM who have one or more children living apart from them half or more of the time
Glubka (1983)	USA	1983	personal narrative		Personal	no	PN: personal narrative	
Ebaugh (1988)	USA	1983	106 people who had exited a role: 10 NRM	Texas mainly	Snowballing,	no	Q: 2-hour interviews: set questions then open ended	Role exit

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Meyers & Lakin (1983)	USA	early 1980s	70 NRM, 12 RF & professionals (attorneys & therapists)	USA	Non-probability, purposive	minimal	Q: in depth intensive interviews	Voluntary relinquished. Includes personal experience
Koehler (1982)	USA	1982	3 NRM	Washington DC area	Non-probability, purposive: personal contacts	no	Q: interviews	Includes personal experience
Rosenblum (1984, 1986)	USA	1981-83	20 NRM	Washington DC area	Non-probability, purposive: half personal contacts & half from support group Offspring	no	Q: semi structured interviews	Voluntary relinquished & less than 50% care & child 14 years or younger. Includes personal experience

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Constantatos (1984)	USA	early 1980s	20 NRM, 20 RM & 20 married mothers	Texas	not known	no	M: survey & semi-structured interview (NRM & RM only)	Compared NRM, RM & married mothers
Herrerias (1984)(1995)	USA	1983	130 NRM	Southwest USA (mainly Texas)	Non-probability, purposive: newspaper ads, support groups, university billboard, featured article in newspaper.	minimal	M: mixed methods. Face-to-face or mail back survey, life history questionnaire & 102 in-depth interviews	Primary parent for at least 6 months & voluntary relinquished at least 6 months previously. Includes personal experience
Greif & Pabst (1988) & Greif (1986)	USA & Canada	1983-1987	517 NRM	45 USA states & Canada	Non-probability, purposive: - questionnaire in June 1983 Single Parent magazine (Parents Without Partners), sent to chapters of Mothers Without Custody & review of 400 divorce decrees in Baltimore County 1968-87. 1987 follow up interviews	yes	M: mail back questionnaire & interviews of subset of respondents	Mothers who did not have primary custody of at least one child 18 years or younger

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Chesler (1986)	USA & Canada	1960-1981	60 NRM & 55 RF	USA & Canada	Non-probability: snowballing	yes	Q: 2-10-hour interviews & court documents	Primary caretaker mothers who were 'custodially challenged'
Edwards (1989)	USA, Canada, New Zealand, UK & Australia	1981-82	100 NRM	USA, Canada, New Zealand, UK & Australia	Non-probability, purposive: ad in MS magazine	minimal	M: mail back questionnaire with open ended pages for narrative	Voluntary relinquished. Includes personal experience
Larsen (1987)	Canada	1987	17 NRM	Vancouver Canada	Word of mouth, bulletin boards of community centres, universities, libraries & women's centres & ads in local newspaper	no	Q: semi-structured interviews	Mothers who voluntarily relinquished custody of a least one child to their ex-partner. Includes personal experience
Christensen, Dahl and Rettig (1990)	USA	1986	114 NRM 929 NRF	Minnesota	Random sample of 30% of divorces with children finalised in 1986 in 10 counties & all cases where less than 150 in that year: final sample 1,153	yes	R: analysis of court records	

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
					court cases			
Benson & Pasley (1993)	USA	1985	10 NRM 33 NRF 11 RF 29 RM	Kentucky	Sample of remarried couples from Fayette county marriage license records between 1980 & 1985 & random list of 698 households.	yes	S: mail out questionnaire	Paper based on subsample of remarried parents who pay or receive child support
Franks (1990)	UK	late 1980s	23 NRM	National	Non-probability, purposive, Mothers Living Apart from Their Children (MATCH) members	minimal	Q: interviews	

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Zuravin & Greif (1989)	USA	late 1980s	8 NRM	Baltimore	Purposive: 8 cases from a dataset of 518 low-income urban single parent mothers selected from known to Child Protection for abuse or neglect ($n=237$) from a sample frame of 1,744 families using the services in Jan 1984 & a control group on welfare ($n=237$) selected from a sample frame of cohort of 37,158 families	no	M: closed question face to face survey interviews & child protection case record data	Mothers with child in foster care who lost custody of the child between sampling & interview
Maccoby & Mnookin (1992)	USA	1985-1989	1124 families (364 not mother sole care)	California	Court records for cohort of families divorcing between Sept 1984–March 1985 in 2 counties	yes	M: longitudinal cohort survey. 3 telephone survey interviews with each parent & content analysis of court records	Divorced families with at least one child under 16

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Stewart (1999a, 1999b)	USA	1987-88 NSFH	Study 1: 156 NRM & 531 NRF. Study 2: 139 NRM & 479 NRF	National	National Survey of Families & Households (NSFH): national probability sample of 13,008 respondents	yes	S: National survey	Respondents who reported not living with a biological child aged 18 or younger
Greif & Emad (1989)	USA	1988	39 NRM	National	Follow up calls to 517 NRM from original sample	yes	S: phone interviews & mail out questionnaire	Follow up from previous study
Arditti & Madden-Derdich (1993)	USA	1986-1990	13 NRM	2 counties in south western Virginia	Selected from court records.: letters sent to 40 NRM	yes	Q: semi-structured interviews-face to face interviews	Divorced 1986-92 with children & have been or are currently noncustodial parents
Clumpus (1996)	UK	Early 1990s	10 NRM	National	Non-probability, purposive: MATCH members	no	Q: semi structured interviews 1-3 hours	Women who lost care of their children & previously primary carers includes personal experience

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Jackson (1994)	UK	early 1990s	60 NRM	National	Non-probability: personal contact, MATCH & snowballing	no	Q: narrative interviews & letters	Voluntary relinquished: not adoption, fostering, racial difference, in prison or mental or physical disability of mother or child. Includes personal experience
Kielty (2005,2008)	UK	early 1990s	20 NRM	National	Non-probability, purposive: MATCH members, personal contact & snowballing	no	Q: psycho-social narrative interviews	Women who were divorced or separated from their children's father & living apart from their children
West & Kissman (1992)	USA	1991				no	TCS: case studies	Treatment issues
Basham (1990)	USA	1990	28 NRM	Washington DC area	Convenience sample: Separation & Divorce Support Network & Mothers Without Custody, mental health workers, attorneys & snowballing	no	Q: semi-structured interviews & testing using standardised tests related to moral dilemmas	14 voluntary & 14 non-voluntary NRM

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Heikes (1993)	USA	1991-92	7 NRM & 20 RF	Texas	Convenience sample: public court records, Parents Without Partners, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, local support group for noncustodial mothers, newspaper ads, snowballing	Yes	Q: semi-structured interviews	
Pearson & Anhalt (1994)	USA	early 1990s	394 parents: 100 father custody cases	Florida, Michigan, Arizona, Kansas & Los Angeles	Participants in 5 visitation enforcement programs	yes	M: Telephone survey & site visits: observations & interviews with staff, lawyers, judges & court administrators.	
Jensen & Clausen (1997)	Norway	1996	46 NRM, 531 NRF, 620 RM & 59 RF	Norway	Two separate samples of RP & NRP selected by Statistics Norway	no	S: Telephone or postal survey	

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Maclean & Eekelaar (1993)	UK	1994	249 parents: 5 NRM	England & Wales	Screening question in large continuous omnibus survey run by market research company to locate possible participants to contact later for interview	yes, but not NRM or RF	S: survey - interview	Parents who had a child who was living apart from their other parent. Child support section only reported RM & NRF
Greif (1997)	US & Canada	1990s	109 NRF & 76 NRM	US & Canada	Convenience sample: survey sent to members of Parents Without Partners	yes	M: survey & interviews with subsample	Previously married parents who have lost contact with their child
Ferguson (1994)	USA	1994				no	TCS: case studies	Social work practice

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Babcock (1995,1997)	USA	mid 1990s -	30 NRM interviews, 20 NRM survey respondents	Idaho	Non-probability, purposive: sample of public divorce records between 1989 & 1994 (500 cases where fathers awarded custody), ads, support groups & snowballing	yes	Q: face to face interviews 1-5 hours or mail surveys	Divorced mothers living apart from at least one minor child as a result of a custody decision made through the courts or in a family setting
Santora & Hays (1998)	USA	mid 1990s	26 NRM	Seattle area	Non-probability, purposive: community newspaper ads at universities & family law center, NOW Newsletter Seattle & personal referrals & snowballing	minimal	Q: semi structured interviews	

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Smock & Manning (1997)	USA	1994 PSID	42 NRM/RF couples & 178 NRF/RM couples	National	Subset of Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) 1994 Wave	yes	S: National longitudinal survey	
Mayer (1997)	USA	mid 1990s	42 NRM & 57 RM	Ohio & nearby states	Non-probability, purposive: county courthouse divorce records, Parents without Partners, other social service organisations, newspaper ads, internet & word of mouth	no	M: mail back questionnaire	Compared role adjustment & functioning of NRM & RM
Thacker (2005)	Canada	1997-1999	10 NRM	North central British Columbia	Non-probability, purposive: networking & snowballing	no	Q: semi-structured interviews with open ended questions	Mothers of a child (born or adopted) aged less than 17 years at time of research & with whom she didn't live

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Pagano (2000)	USA	mid to late 1990s	9 NRM	New Hampshire	Non-probability, purposive: support group MOM-LAC	minimal	Q: in depth intensive interviews	
Bailey (2003), Bailey & Zvonkovic (2003)	USA	late 1990s	6 NRM & 30 NRF	National	Non-probability, purposive: letters, flyers & email to Family List Server	minimal	Q: in depth telephone interviews, semi structured	Nonresident divorced parents with at least one child aged 5-17 who lived a minimum of 50 miles from their children & had contact.
Gustafson (2005)	Canada	2001	Author's personal experience as NRM			yes	PN: personal narrative	Personal experience

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Lau (2004, 2005, 2007)	Hong Kong	Early 2000s	13 NRM, 32 NRF & 64 RP	Hong Kong	Non-probability, purposive: referrals from welfare agencies	yes	S: survey, data collected from RP, NRP & child	Chinese divorced couples with at least one child aged 6–17 & NRP making at least one contact (in person or on the phone) with the sampled children in the previous 3 months. Child support reported in aggregate.
Horwood (2004)	New Zealand	2002-03	1,003 cohort participants: 49 NRP (8 NRM)	New Zealand	1977 Christchurch Birth Cohort Study	yes	S: survey	Longitudinal cohort study: information collected at aged 25 years

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Thuen (2006)	Norway	2001-2002	1,813 nonresident parents, 145 NRM	Norway	Nonresident parents were recruited through the National Insurance register & membership records of the Norwegian Joint Custody Association	no	S: Postal survey	Mainly about contact & psychological adjustment after separation
McKay & Atkinson (2005)	UK	2002	312 NRP (34 NRM) & 649 RP (45 RF)	UK	A module on nonresident parental contact was run on the National Statistics Omnibus Survey in April to November 2002.	yes	S: Telephone or postal survey	Unpublished report cited in Atkinson & McKay (2005)
Eicher-Catt (2001, 2004)	USA	2000s	Personal narrative		NA	minimal	PN: personal narrative	Personal experience

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Sousa & Sorensen (2006)	USA	2002 NSAF	2.2m NRM & 7.8m NRF (weighted data)	National	National Survey of America's Families (NSAF): National random sample of 100,000 people (42,000 households) in 13 representative US states	yes	S: national representative survey, telephone survey	
Becerra & Ong (2001)	USA	2001	44 NRM, 830 NRF & 450 RM	Los Angeles	Random sample from one LA county of 10,000 NRP in arrears, 874 NRP & 450 RM matched to NRF	yes	S: closed ended paper & pencil (NRP), telephone interview survey (RP)	RP on welfare & NRP at least 3 months behind on child support

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Stirling & Aldrich (2012)	USA	2000-01	622 NRF & 81 NRM	Washington State	All child support orders from the Washington State Division of Child Support between Oct 2000 & March 2001	yes	R: analysis of court records	Analysis of child support orders
Brown, Joung & Berger (2006)	USA	1996-2001	598 shared care & 595 sole mother cases	Wisconsin	Court Records	yes	S: Telephone survey	Comparison of cohort of divorce cases 2000-2001 with earlier divorce cases 1996-1998 to observe change in custody law

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Myers (2004)	USA	1999-2001	490 NRM & 6,163 NRF	Virginia	A random sample of 6,653 cases, representing noncustodial parents with at least one case in arrears, drawn from the sub-population of 182,564 arrears cases in Virginia. (5,151 cases followed to July 2001)	yes	R: longitudinal administrative records	Child support payers with arrears only
Lyngstad (2010)	Norway	2004	2,692 separated parents, 155 NRM. 1,020 ex-couple dyads. The child support research used data from 662 couples.	Norway	Statistics Norway survey: Contact Arrangements & Child Maintenance 2004: sample of 3,582 parents with a child under 18 years living in Norway & with only one parent registered as living with the child. Two samples were drawn; first children were defined & then one with RPs& other NRPs.	yes	S: telephone survey with follow-up postal. Some register administrative data.	Used ex-couple dyad data from the Contact Arrangements & Child Maintenance 2004

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Kitterod & Lyngstad (2011)	Norway	2004	2,692 separated parents, 155 NRM. 1,020 ex-couple dyads.	Norway	Statistics Norway survey: Contact Arrangements & Child Maintenance 2004 (see Lyngstad (2010)	no	S: telephone survey with follow-up postal and (administrative data.	
Pieterse (2007)	South Africa	mid 2000s	15 NRM	Eastern & Western Cape	Non-probability, purposive: newspaper ads, professional contacts & snowballing	no	Q: in depth interviews, focus groups, case studies	Any divorced mother without custody of her children whether situation reached amicably or after protracted conflict
Hart (2008)	UK	2000s	counselling case studies		Case studies from professional practice in UK	minimal	TCS: case studies	Self-help includes personal experience

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Herrerias (2008)	USA	Mid 2000s	285 NRM	National	Non-probability, purposive: print media & internet based-online support groups	Yes	M: mail back questionnaire: forced choice & clinical measures survey & open-ended questions.	
Bemiller (2005, 2008)	USA	2004	16 NRM	Ohio	Convenience sample: flyers, university, laundromat, therapeutic settings, county court records, personal contact & snowballing	yes	Q: semi - structured interviews, face to face	
Kruk (2010, 2015)	Canada	2009?	14 NRM	British Columbia	Research co-designed with support group, respondents from group & snowballing	no	Q: narrative & semi-structured interviews	Mothers who lost custody

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Colmar Brunton (2009)	New Zealand	2008	1,062 separated parents (survey): 107 female payers & 50 interviews (5 NRM, 4 shared care mothers)	New Zealand	Self-complete questionnaires sent to 10,000 separated parents who paid or received child support through Inland Revenue or who indicated on their application for tax credits that they had a private arrangement for child support. Parents selected for in-depth interviews were from Colmar Brunton's panel of potential research participants & snowballing.	Yes	M: mail out survey & interviews with subsample	Reporting & analysis in aggregate and not by gender
Snowdon & Kotze (2012)	New Zealand	2007	3 NRM	New Zealand	Participants from Snowdon's therapy practice.	minimal	Q: narrative & personal narrative	Personal experience
Atkinson & McKay (2005)	UK	2005	78 NRP ('most' NRF: number NRM not stated)	UK	78 interviews from sample of 988 employed NRP drawn from CSA records	yes	Q: semi-structured interviews	

Researchers	Country	Year of study	Participants	Location	How recruited	Child support	Type of study	Comments
Kartch (2013)	USA	2011	20 NRM & 20 NRF	Wisconsin	Facebook, Craigslist and university	no	Q: in-depth-interview face-to-face or by telephone	
Cozzolino (2014)	USA	2013	2 NRM, 6 NRF, 7 RM & 6 adult children with divorced parents	Texas	University, Community College and Craigslist	yes	Q: semi-structured interviews	Explores appropriate use of child support

Key: NRM=nonresident mother, NRF=nonresident father, RM=resident mother, RF=resident father, LM=liable mother, PF=payee father, NRP=nonresident parent, RP=resident parent

S=survey, Q=qualitative study, R=representative administrative data, M=mixed methods, PN=personal narrative, TCS=therapeutic case studies.

Notes: 'Includes personal experience' means the researcher refers to their experience as a nonresident mother or a liable mother, whether personal narrative or other study.

Appendix B

Table B1 Fearful parental relationships:
all parents

	Fearful (%)	Not fearful (%)	Total (%)
All parents (by sex)			
Mothers (n=2,793)	9.6	90.4	100.0
Fathers (n=2,217)	6.4	93.6	100.0
<i>p</i> =.047			
All parents (by child support role)			
Liabe mothers (n=184)	17.7	82.3	100.0
Liabe fathers (n=1,681)	6.4	93.7	100.0
Payee mothers (n=2,283)	9.2	90.8	100.0
Payee fathers (n=206)	7.3	92.7	100.0
Neither (n=656)	7.3	92.7	100.0
<i>p</i> =.029			
All mothers			
Liabe mothers (n=184)	17.7	83.3	100.0
Other mothers (n=2,609)	9.0	91.0	
<i>p</i> =.017			

Notes: Data are weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data.

Table B 2 Liable-mother dyads: socio-demographics and family dynamics

	Liable mothers n=78	Payee fathers n=78
Age (years) (mean)	40.50	45.62
Household composition (%)		
Lived alone or shared with other adults	20.5	6.4
Resident children and no partner	38.5	68.1
Partner and no resident children	11.5	0.0
Partner and resident children	29.5	25.6
Total	100.0	100.0
Has a degree or higher qualification (%)	34.6	22.1
Net annual personal income (mean)	\$42,532	\$39,893
Net annual household income (mean)	\$58,613	\$45,940
Main income source (%)		
Salary or wages	87.0	53.9
Self-employment/other	5.2	23.1
Government payment	7.8	23.1
Total	100.0	100.0
Employment (%)		
Not in paid employment	11.5	21.8
Short part-time (1–20 hours)	14.1	12.8
Long part-time (21–34 hours)	19.2	3.9
Standard full-time (35–44 hours)	35.9	38.5
Long full-time (45 hours or more)	19.2	23.1
Total	100.0	100.0
Self-assessed poor financial circumstances (%)	16.7	19.2
Experienced hardship in last 12 months (%)	26.9	29.5
Years together (mean)	12.18	12.43
Previously married (%)	84.6	83.3

	Liable mothers n=78	Payee fathers n=78
Number of former relationship children (mean)	2.07	2.06
Years separated (mean)	6.08	5.92
Age of child (years) (mean)	11.40	11.41
Age of youngest child (years) (mean)	10.56	10.63
Where child lives (%)		
All or more than 50% of the time with father	47.4	47.4
Roughly 50/50 split	33.3	39.7
More than 50% or all the time with mother	19.2	12.8
Total	100.0	100.0
Mother's time with child in last 12 months (%)		
No time	4.1	2.6
Daytime-only	4.1	6.6
Some overnights	91.9	90.8
Total	100.0	100.0
Original Scheme time categories (%)		
Mother minor (0–109 nights)	35.1	40.8
Mother substantial (110–145 nights)	5.2	6.6
Shared (146–219 nights)	42.9	42.1
Mother major (220–255 nights)	9.1	5.2
Mother sole (256–365 nights)	7.8	5.3
Total	100.0	100.0
Mother's overnights in last 12 months (mean)	145.3	128.6
Sex of former relationship children (%)		
All boys	21.8	21.8
All girls	34.6	35.9
Both sexes	43.6	42.3
Total	100.0	100.0
Distance between parents' houses (mean)	117.3 km	119.1 km

	Liabe mothers n=78	Payee fathers n=78
Arrangements for former relationship children (%)		
All mainly with father	38.5	37.2
All equal-time	30.8	37.2
All mainly with mother	14.1	7.7
Split-residence	16.7	18.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Parental relationship quality in the last 12 months (%)		
Friendly	14.1	11.5
Cooperative	25.6	20.5
Distant	18.0	30.8
Lots of conflict	24.4	29.5
Fearful	18.0	7.7
Total	100.0	100.0
Great deal or some conflict in the last 12 months (%)	60.3	56.4
Frequently or sometimes argued over money in last 12 months (%)	33.3	26.9
Parenting arrangement decision (%)		
Parents agreed or parents and child agreed	36.4	39.7
Judge decided	29.9	29.5
Mother decided	6.5	5.1
Father decided	11.7	5.1
Child decided	9.1	14.1
Other	6.5	6.4
Total	100.0	100.0

Notes: Data are unweighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. One liable mother and two payee fathers had missing data on nights. 'Child' means focal child. 'Distant' includes 'no contact with former partner in last 12 months' and 'no contact ever'. 'Great deal or some' includes 'varies'. 'Did not talk about money' includes 'no contact in last 12 months' and 'no contact ever'.

Table B 3 Comparison of reports of 78 former couple liable mother and payee father: full payment

	Payee father in full (%)	Payee father not in full or should receive (%)	Payee father other arrangement (%)	Payee father unable to determine (%)
Liable mother in full (%)	44.9	10.3	1.3	15.4
Liable mother not in full or should pay (%)	3.8	6.4	5.1	
Liable mother other arrangement (%)	1.3	5.1	Not applicable	1.3
Liable mother unable to determine (%)	3.8			1.3

Notes: Data are unweighted. Sum of percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding
Percentages in bold represent concordant reports and those in italics possible concordant reports where one parent had another arrangement and the other parent reported full payment. ‘Should pay’ or ‘should receive’ deemed not in full and includes did not know expected amount or amount varies. ‘Unable to determine’ are parents who paid or received child support but did not know expected and/or actual or the expected and/or actual amount varies.

Table B 4 Liable-mother dyads: concordance between reports of former partners on whether payment made in full

	Payee father: in full (%)	Payee father: not in full (%)
Liable mother: in full (%)	68.6	15.7
Liable mother: not in full (%)	5.9	9.8

Notes: Data are unweighted. *n*=51 dyads. Sum of percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Percentages in bold represent concordant responses. Should pay or receive treated as not in full. Excludes 16 dyads where one or both parents had missing information and 11 where one parent reported another arrangement.

Table B 5 Comparison of reports of 78 former couple liable mothers and payee fathers: timeliness

	Payee father always received on time (%)	Payee father mostly received on time (%)	Payee father sometimes to never received on time or should receive (%)	Don't know (%)	Payee father has other arrangement. (%)
Liable mother always paid on time (%)	32.1	12.8	15.4	2.6	2.6
Liable mother mostly paid on time (%)	1.3	1.3	7.7	1.3	
Liable mother sometimes to never paid on time or should pay (%)		2.6	6.5		3.9
Don't know (%)	1.3		1.3		
Liable mother has other arrangement. (%)	2.6		5.1		

Notes: Data are unweighted. Sum of percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Percentages in bold represent concordant reports and those in italics possible concordance where one parent had another arrangement and the other parent reported always on time.

Table B 6 Liable-mother dyads: concordance of former partners reports of whether payment always made on time

	Payee father: always on time (%)	Payee father: not always on time (%)
Liable mother: always on time (%)	40.3	35.5
Liable mother: not always on time (%)	1.6	22.6

Notes: Data are unweighted. *n*=62 dyads. Sum of percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. Percentages in bold represent concordant reports. Parents who should pay or should receive were not asked about timeliness and were treated as not on time. Excludes 11 dyads where one parent reported having another arrangement and five where one parent did not know regularity.

Table B 7 Liable mothers with another arrangement

Details of arrangement	Assessment	Child Support Collect	Expected amount	Mother's time: all children	Mother's nights
Pays for all expenses	Yes	Yes	\$12,480	Less: 1 child	120
Pays child directly	Yes	Yes	\$676	Less: 2 children	90
Neither owes anything	Yes	Yes	\$1,200	Split: 2 children	24
Pays school fees	Yes	Yes	\$0	Equal: 1 child	183
Father won't accept money	Yes	Yes	\$444	More: 2 children	245
Pays costs when children with her	Registered agreement	No	\$0	Less: 4 children	80
Pays all costs	Yes	No	Don't know	More: 1 child	287
Share all costs 50/50	Private agreement	No	Varies	Equal: 1 child	209
Pay half costs	Private agreement	No	Varies	Less: 2 children	90
Share costs pro-rata	Don't know	No	Varies	More: 2 children	240
Father pays school fees & expenses for one child	Private agreement	No	\$6,096	Equal: 2 children	183
Father pays school fees	Registered agreement	No	Don't know	More: 1 child	365
Share costs 50/50	Yes	No	\$312	Equal: 3 children	183
Father gives money for groceries	Registered agreement	No	\$1,560	Split: 4 children	26
Don't know	Don't know	No	Don't know	Less: 1 child	0
Own agreement	Yes	No	Don't know	Equal: 2 children	183
Split costs	Private agreement	No	Varies	Equal: 1 child	157
No money changes hands	Yes	No	\$1,080	More: 2 children	235
Pays for children's expenses	Yes	No	\$7,200	Equal: 2 children	183
Half school fees and other	Yes	No	\$0	Equal: 2 children	183
Half school fees/other	Yes	No	Don't know	More: 1 child	335
Share costs	Private agreement	No	\$0	Equal: 3 children	183
Joint account for school fees.	Registered agreement	No	\$2,600	Equal: 2 children	183

Details of arrangement	Assessment	Child Support Collect	Expected amount	Mother's time: all children	Mother's nights
No money changes hands	Yes	No	\$336	More: 1 child	Don't know

Notes: *n*=24 liable mothers

Table B 8 Liable parents: satisfaction and fairness of child support payment

	Liable mothers <i>n</i> =180	Liable fathers <i>n</i> =1,652
Satisfaction with amount paid (0=totally dissatisfied, 10=totally satisfied) (mean)	5.12	5.37
SE, CI	0.38, CI 4.37–5.86	0.17, CI 5.04–5.70
<i>p</i> =.540		
Fairness of child support arrangement (0=totally unfair, 10=totally fair)		
For child (mean)	4.86	5.21
SE, CI	0.42, CI 4.03–5.69	0.17, CI 4.87–5.55
<i>p</i> =.445		
For you (mean)	4.57	4.51
SE, CI	0.38, CI 3.82–5.33	0.17, CI 4.18–4.84
<i>p</i> =.882		
For former partner (mean)	8.58	8.18
SE, CI	0.21, CI 8.17–8.98	0.12, CI 7.94–8.41
<i>p</i> =.093		
For current partner (mean)	6.01	4.18
SE, CI	0.62, CI 4.78–7.23	0.30, CI 3.58–4.77
<i>p</i> =.008		
Overall fairness (0=totally unfair for all, 30=totally fair for all) (mean)	17.95	17.95
SE, CI	0.84, CI 16.31–19.59	0.34, CI 17.29–18.61
<i>p</i> =.100		

Notes: Data are weighted. Numbers for some variables are less due to missing data. 'Child' means focal child. Overall fairness based on liable mothers (*n*=151) and liable fathers (*n*=1,155) who had valid responses on fairness for child, liable parent and former partner.

Table B 9 Logistic regression model of odds of non-compliance for liable mothers: Full model

Factor	Odds ratios
Mother’s overnights in last 12 months (for each additional night)	1.01 (<i>p</i> <.001)
Mother has biological children from more than one relationship (ref: only former relationship children) children from more than one relationship	0.54 (<i>p</i> =.397)
Fearful relationship (ref: no) fearful	0.41 (<i>p</i> =.329)
Main income source (ref: salary or wages) self-employed/other	59.94 (<i>p</i> <.001)
government income support	1.60 (<i>p</i> =.634)
Time since separation	1.13 (<i>p</i> =.064)
Conflict over money in last 12 months (ref: frequently or sometimes argued) rarely or never argued or did not talk about money	3.73 (<i>p</i> =.059)
Number of liable mothers	136
F	4.95 F(7, 4,990)
Prob> F	<i>p</i> <.001

Notes: Data are weighted. Overnights represent time with the focal child. ‘Biological children’ include adopted children but not stepchildren. ‘Did not talk about money’ includes ‘no contact in last 12 months’ and ‘no contact ever’.

Table B 10 Logistic regression model of odds of non-compliance for liable mothers: parenting arrangements of all former relationship children-

Factor	Odds ratios
Arrangements of former relationship children (ref: all children mainly with the father) all children mainly with the mother	19.23 (<i>p</i> =.001)
all equal-time	5.13 (<i>p</i> =.055)
split-residence	10.28 (<i>p</i> =.002)
Conflict over money in last 12 months (ref: frequently or sometimes argued) rarely or never argued or did not talk about money	10.45 (<i>p</i> =.001)
Number of liable mothers	146
F	4.52 F(4,5003)
Prob> F	<i>p</i> =.001

Notes: Data are weighted. Overnights and equal-time variables represent time with the focal child. ‘Former relationship children’ mean those 18 years or younger. ‘Did not talk about money’ includes ‘no contact in last 12 months’ and ‘no contact ever’.

Appendix C

The 2014 Inquiry

In 2014, the Child Support Program was again the subject of a Parliamentary Inquiry (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2015) (hereafter ‘the 2014 Inquiry’). The Committee’s terms of reference appear to ‘essentially represent some of the key pressure in the revised Scheme’ (Vnuk, Smyth & Archer 2015: 157). As Vnuk, Smyth and Archer (2015) note, the bulk of the 25 recommendations made by the Committee focused on service delivery and minor policy and procedural matters. However, five proposals were more substantial, requiring ‘significant changes to systems and resourcing’ (Vnuk et al. 2015: 162). Vnuk, Smyth and Archer (2015: 155) foreshadowed ‘little capacity or political will to act on...[these] recommendations in the current economic climate’. To a great extent this view was confirmed when the Australian Government (2016) responded to the Committee’s report in August 2016. Of the ‘big five’ proposals (Vnuk et al. 2015: 162), the Government (2016: 4) accepted the recommendation to review the Cost of Children Table and some aspects of the formula, but appeared to reject the ‘income management’ component of this recommendation.¹ This part proposed ‘child support income management where there are substantiated allegations of child support payments not being adequately spent on the needs of the child’ (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2015: xviii).

The Government accepted two other, related, recommendations ‘in principle’. These two recommendations proposed an extension of mediation (also known as ‘family dispute resolution’) to child support via the network of government-funded community sector-run Family Relationship Centres (FRCs) already used for disputes about parenting-

¹ The Australian Government’s (2016: 4) response to this was somewhat ambiguous: ‘the Government would only consider income managing child support where the person also receives an income support payment which is already subject to income management’. The Government then went on to list some logistical and costs issues that would be obstacles to the progression of this proposal.

time and children's matters. The first recommendation proposed that FRCs be used to resolve financial disputes, particularly for newly separated parents, and for financial counselling. One option floated was to encourage parents to reach an agreement on the amount of child support payable which could be registered by DHS as a child support agreement. The second recommendation proposed that FRCs be used when parents apply for a change of assessment under one of the special circumstances grounds or lodge an objection to a DHS decision.²

The two recommendations involving FRCs—particularly the first and more expansive one—would be expensive and complex to implement. Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners (that is, mediators who work in the FRCs) have mixed views about whether child support is an appropriate issue to mediate (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 2015: 36).

Two other recommendations were not accepted by the Government. The first, strongly advocated by mothers' groups (i.e., representing payees' interests), was to trial a 'guaranteed maintenance payment' model and then extend guaranteed payment to some or all payees. This would necessitate DHS taking on responsibility to collect child support from liable parents and therefore bear the full cost of non-compliance rather than payees (Australian Government 2016: 14). The second rejected proposal was an investigation of 'contact enforcement agencies' that operated in other countries with the option to introduce such an agency into Australia (Australian Government 2016: 6). This proposal, supported by fathers' groups, was recommended by an earlier Parliamentary inquiry and subsequently rejected by the Government of the time (Australian Government 2005).

² See House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs (2015) for details of these proposals and Vnuk, Smyth & Archer (2015) for commentary on potential challenges with the implementation.